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ISBN 0-315-55426-6

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES: A CASE STUDY

BY

ROBERT W. GARDNER

(C)

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1989

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

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submitted by Robert W. Gardner
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

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Date: September 29, 1989

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine tenth grade students' perceptions about physical education classes. Students were asked to indicate their likes and dislikes about physical education classes and their reasons for selecting credit options in physical education.

Group interviews were utilized to ask students about the reasons for their stated likes and dislikes with physical education classes, to examine their past experiences in physical education to understand how their perceptions of physical education classes had been formed, and to ask about the students' reasons for selecting the physical education 10 three or five credit option. Key issues were initially identified through the completion of a questionnaire with the questionnaire results serving as the basis for the interview. Interview groups of three to five students were selected from each of the physical education 10 credit options; three credit males, three credit females, five credit males and five credit females. There were nine such groups involving a total of 33 students.

Students identified the following factors which influenced their satisfaction with physical education classes:

1. Health related fitness was identified as the most important reason for students taking physical education even though fitness knowledge was deficient.

2. Although the cardio-vascular fitness objective was important the activities to achieve this objective, mainly running, were disliked.

3. There was need for greater variety and choice of activities in their class curriculum.

4. There was greater acceptance of an evaluation system that emphasized effort and participation rather than skill development.

5. Distinct groups based on ability existed in physical education classes, with very little interaction occurring between groups.

6. Physical education classes should challenge students in order to be satisfying.

7. The teacher was an important influence on satisfaction with the class.

8. Physical education classes offered students a break in the day from their other academic rigours.

The findings suggested that changes to current practices in physical education classes were necessary to encourage students to continue in non-compulsory physical education.

Acknowledgements

I owe many thanks to Dr. Andrea Borys for her guidance and critical analysis of my writing throughout this research. I would also like to express thanks and gratitude to the following individuals.

To my wife Jennifer. Her loving support and encouragement has been an inspiration for which I am eternally grateful.

To Paul and Kathryn who may now see their father in the summers. Thank you for being so understanding.

To Dr. Larry Beauchamp for being there when I needed to talk, and for providing me with many sources of information.

To Dr. Dave Sande for his valuable feedback during various stages of this research.

To Dr. Jim Parsons who was very encouraging and supportive of this research project.

To my good friend Sue who provided ideas and was able to keep me on track when I veered off course. Her input to this research was invaluable.

To my mother and father, Jim and Wilda. Without them deadlines could not have been met. I thank them very much for their support, assistance and strong belief in me.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Physical education programs must satisfy the needs and interests of students if they are to convince students of the importance of continuing to enroll in physical education courses when they are no longer compulsory. It is essential, therefore that physical educators investigate the students' likes and dislikes about physical education, and the reasons for their opinions, so that programs can be designed to accommodate their preferences and include activities which have personal relevance while at the same time promoting health and fitness.

Students' perceptions will alert physical educators to the changing needs and interests of high school students. Understanding student needs and interests is critical in order to influence fitness levels and participation patterns of all Canadian students. Developing an "activity habit" in Canadian youth is significant in promoting health and fitness benefits in later years (Verabioff, 1986). Verabioff found that fitness gains as a result of taking physical education were not immediately noticeable in students but gains were evident after three years in the program. More significantly, the patterns of activity that were established early were of greater importance. Verabioff's research identifies the importance of the physical educator's role in shaping fitness and

participation patterns of Canadian youth. A greater understanding of students' needs and interests will make physical educators more effective in carrying out this task.

Declining enrollment patterns are evident in physical education courses which are non-compulsory. The Physical Education Program Review undertaken by the Edmonton Public School Board (1984), showed that approximately 21% of all grade 11 and 12 students in their system were enrolled in physical education 20 and 30. The provincial figures from 1984 to 1987 show that a funnel effect exists with the enrollments in physical education 10, 20, and 30. Of the 31,500 students enrolled in grade 10 physical education in 1984, only 12,880 (41%) of those students enrolled in physical education 20 in 1985, and only 6,200 (20%) of the original number enrolled in physical education 30 in 1986 (Alberta Education Annual Report 1984, 1985. 1986a, 1987b). This low enrollment pattern continues today indicating a general trend in physical education in the province of Alberta and raises the question: Why are enrollments in non-compulsory physical education 20 and 30 declining? If almost 60% of high school students do not go beyond compulsory physical education 10, how well equipped are they with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively maintain a fit and healthy lifestyle in their future?

Almost twice as many males as females continue in physical education courses beyond the tenth grade. Only 30%

of the females compared to 50% of males continue beyond physical education 10. This statistic leads to another question: Why is the enrollment of females in physical education 20 and 30 so much lower than that of males?

Students' accessibility to physical education is reduced because of an increase in academic requirements. Students have only a limited amount of available time in their timetables for non-compulsory courses. During 1988-89 the requirements for the Advanced High School Diploma (Alberta Education, 1986b) increased from 62 to 75 specified credits out of the minimum 100 credits required (Alberta Education, 1988b). This revision represents a shift toward an increased emphasis on academic requirements and places more demands on the student's timetable, resulting in little time for optional courses.

In Alberta, physical education 10 has a variety of credit options. The Alberta Education diploma requirements for physical education were increased from two to three credits during the 1988-89 school year (Alberta Education, 1987c). Until this credit change was made, credit offerings in physical education varied in the province with two, three, four or five credits in physical education available at the 10 and 20 levels. Three credit physical education refers to a course which requires 75 hours of instruction while five credit physical education requires 125 hours of instruction.

The majority of grade 10 students in Alberta are enrolled in five credit physical education. The provincial enrollment statistics for physical education 10 show that 67% of the students receive five credits, 2% four credits, 30% three credits and 1% two credits. In physical education 20 the percentage of students receiving five credits increased to 82% while the percentage of students receiving three credits decreased to 16% (Alberta Education, 1987a).

No information is available as to the number of schools having multiple credit offerings in their course scheduling. Larger schools are able to have multiple credit options in their timetables because they have the staff and facilities necessary to offer an increased number of classes, as well as the number of students necessary to make these options viable. If there is more than one credit option available to students, for example if the school offers both five credit and three credit physical education, I have wondered about the factors influencing their decisions to select one physical education course over another.

Course scheduling may influence whether students select physical education 20 and 30. If physical education is offered opposite a course required by the student to meet diploma requirements, physical education is not chosen. Discussions with colleagues disclose that the most common reasons given by students for not selecting physical education 20 are the increased demands placed on their

timetables. For example the new Career and Life Management course is compulsory for all grade 11 students. If physical education is scheduled at the same time as this course it will eliminate the students' opportunity to enroll in physical education.

In addition to lack of accessibility there are other reasons why students do not take physical education. Students' perceptions of physical education, based on their experiences, influence whether subsequent physical education courses are selected. A person's actions toward a topic are a direct reflection of his/her thoughts and feelings toward that topic (Thurstone, 1928), and therefore, if given a choice, I believe that students' recollections of their past experiences in physical education will influence whether they select the next level of physical education. Consequently student perceptions of their satisfaction with physical education classes form the central focus of this study. It is my hope that information gathered from the students in this study will enable physical educators to analyze their courses to determine how best to structure the program to encourage elective or optional enrollment in physical education 20 and 30.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore the students' perceptions of tenth grade physical education classes. This study will address the following questions:

1. What do students view as being important about tenth grade physical education classes?

2. What are the students' stated likes and dislikes about tenth grade physical education classes?

3. How do student likes and dislikes affect their future selection of physical education classes?

4. How do previous experiences in physical education classes influence the students' perceptions of physical education classes?

5. What factors influence the students' decision to take physical education for three or five credits?

6. Why do students continue or discontinue physical education beyond the tenth grade requirement?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study on students' perceptions about physical education classes is that through interviews, a process which has not been used in past research, students are able to state their likes and dislikes about physical

education classes. They have the opportunity and are encouraged to elaborate on reasons for their opinions, thus identifying key issues about physical education classes which influence their perceptions and their physical education course selections. The results of this study contribute to the research concerning the relevance of current physical education programs and their effectiveness in meeting the needs of the students.

Past research which has explored students' perceptions of physical education has focused on the measurement of students' attitudes toward physical education (Bell et al, 1953; Brumbach & Cross, 1965; Butcher, 1976, 1979; Earl & Stennett, 1983, 1987; Poitras, 1984; Williams & O'Neil, 1983). These studies have measured student attitudes towards the acceptance or rejection of the objectives and values of physical education. More recent studies have explored students' likes and dislikes about physical education, but in none of these studies has the researcher interviewed students and given them an opportunity to express their views (Avery & Lumpkin, 1987; Butcher, 1982; Davidson, 1982; Rice, 1988).

Student input is important to ensure that students' needs are met by the courses offered (Kisabeth, 1986; Chambasian, 1987). Therefore, the students' perceptions of physical education classes are of major significance when considering curriculum planning and implementation. This

study explores students' perceptions in a single setting, and interprets their comments in order to understand what students are saying about their physical education classes. Even though student needs and interests vary from setting to setting, this study provides a procedure for physical educators to determine student needs and interests.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In Alberta physical education is required for high school graduation. Students are required to obtain three credits in physical education 10 in order to qualify for a high school diploma. Thereafter enrollment in physical education 20 and 30 is optional. The reclassification of physical education to a category C subject, which takes place during the 1989-90 school year, places physical education in the same category as second languages, fine arts, industrial arts, home economics, business education and law (Alberta Education, 1989). Category C subjects will be credited towards an advanced diploma if 10 credits are accumulated and the class culminates in a 30 level course.

Physical education is included in the school curriculum because of its contribution to the development of the "whole child." The general goals of education provide opportunities for the total development of each student, to allow each student to achieve his/her potential, and to contribute to the well being and advancement of the society in which he/she lives (Alberta Education, 1988a). The goal of physical education is to educate the student "through the physical" and to develop each student's skill and understanding so that he/she may experience a more enjoyable quality of life. (Alberta Education, 1988; Manitoba Department of Education, 1981).

A Definition Of Physical Education

Physical education is a course designed primarily to develop students' motor skills, physical fitness, knowledge, and attitudes toward physical activity. Students are provided the opportunity to develop efficient movement patterns, knowledge of their capabilities and an awareness of fitness in order to lead fit and healthy lives as adults. Alberta Education (1988a) describes physical education as follows:

> Through the provision of knowledge about physical activity and the opportunity to develop physical, social and emotional skills, the physical education program is intended to foster self-initiated participation in physical activities and the formulation of a healthy lifestyle. (p.1)

Physical education is a course that is concerned with the whole being and therefore cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning is important (Alberta Education, 1988a; Manitoba Department of Education, 1981; Saskatchewan Education, 1980; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 1975; Jewett & Bain, 1985).

Physical education is an integral part of a student's total education and is "that part of the education process which utilizes physical activity as a means for stimulating mental-intellectual, social-emotional and physical growth and development" (Province of British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1980, p.1).

The Objectives Of Physical Education

The objectives of physical education emphasize competence in skills or movement, knowledge, and an appreciation for physical activity so that the students as adults can establish their own health and recreative patterns that will lead to a wise and satisfying use of leisure time (Alberta Education, 1988a; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 1975). The objectives of the physical education curriculum guide for Alberta junior and senior high schools stress the importance of the student developing motor skills, developing and maintaining an appropriate individual fitness level, understanding and applying movement concepts, developing positive personal attributes and developing positive interpersonal skills (Alberta Education, 1988a; Nova Scotia, 1985; Manitoba, 1981; Saskatchewan, 1980; Newfoundland and Labrador, 1975; and British Columbia, 1980).

Professional organizations of physical educators recommend that physical education be a part of each student's educational experience. In a position paper entitled "Physical Education For Alberta's Secondary Schools" (Borys, 1984), the Health and Physical Education Council of Alberta recommends that physical education should be an integral part of every student's schooling. The council also stresses the importance of personal fitness,

individual skill development, cognitive development, the development of a positive attitude toward a wide range of activities and a desire for life long participation.

Curriculum Models In Physical Education

A variety of physical education curriculum models exist, each emphasizing a particular goal or goals. Jewett and Bain (1985) have identified seven curriculum models or approaches to physical education and each is designed to provide a basis for decisions regarding the selection, structuring and sequencing of educational experiences.

Developmental Education

The developmental education model is based on the "education-through-the-physical-approach" (Jewett & Bain, 1985, p. 45). This model assumes that human beings have common developmental patterns as well as unique characteristics which influence that developmental process. In this model, all areas of development, physical, mental and social, are considered to be interdependent. The conceptual framework for this curriculum model is derived from research in human development. An overview of developmental stages in each of the domains (psychomotor, cognitive and affective) is used as a scheme to determine what the learner should accomplish. Inherent in the developmental education model are provisions for

opportunities to help children learn how they learn as well as environments designed and altered to meet the needs of the child (Jewett & Bain, 1985). The developmental education model is the most widely endorsed model in physical education. Although many of physical education programs have goals consistent with this theoretical model, most have retained a multi-activity organization and use instructional strategies that make no provisions for individual differences in development (Jewett & Bain).

Humanistic Physical Education

The humanistic physical education model is based on the assumption that physical education contributes to the total well being of the individual but stresses individual choice and self responsibility as the basis for personal growth. This curriculum model uses physical activity to assist the students in their search for personal identity. Hellison (1985) suggests that student self-esteem, self-actualization, self-understanding and interpersonal relations are central to the physical education teaching-learning act.

The humanistic physical education model stresses the uniqueness of each student and emphasizes that no two students are exactly the same in their needs, interests or developmental characteristics. Therefore it is impossible to mold students into a "predetermined state." This model

encourages individual development as a means of self-actualization and self-awareness.

Fitness

Physical educators and curriculum planners are becoming increasingly aware of society's concern about physical fitness. Fitness is included as a curriculum model by Jewett and Bain (1985) because of the increased emphasis being placed on fitness, even though a comprehensive description of such a model does not exist. The conceptual framework for a fitness curriculum model focuses on the knowledge and practice of the health related fitness components of cardiorespiratory fitness, strength, muscular endurance, flexibility and body fatness, as well as the skill related components of balance, coordination, reaction time, agility, power, and speed (Corbin, 1980). Activities in these areas must go beyond health related fitness to include knowledge of how physical activity contributes to one or more of the components. The absence of a clear philosophical statement for the fitness perspective may indicate that most physical educators see fitness as a part, but not all of the physical education curriculum.

Movement Education

The movement education model defines the content of physical education as human movement (Jewett & Bain, 1985). This curriculum model has had its greatest impact at the

elementary level, although the present Saskatchewan physical education curriculum for kindergarten to grade 12 has a movement education focus for all grades (Saskatchewan Education, 1980). The framework for the movement education model divides the content into three areas: educational games, educational gymnastics and educational dance. Within these three areas sixteen themes exist which serve as the basis for designing units of instruction. Jewett and Bain (1985) point out that critics of the movement education model fear that this model relies too much on problem solving and exploration strategies resulting in mediocre rather than quality skill performance.

Kinesiological Studies

The kinesiological studies model is similar to the movement education model in its focus on human movement but it focuses on the secondary as opposed to the elementary level. It is based on the understanding and mastery of human movement and has its foundations in the "disciplinary foundations of the physical education field" (Jewett & Bain, 1985, p.61). This curriculum model describes the physically educated individual as one who knows how to perform, knows about performance and possesses the capacity for self-directed learning. Because of the focus on self-directed learning this model has been called a process model, concerned that the learner know the processes of learning and principles of movement of activities in

physical education. A further assumption of this curricular model is that the learner will apply existing knowledge to new learning situations and therefore a transfer of learning takes place. Critics of the kinesiological studies model object that it intellectualizes physical education and de-emphasizes activity and play, concerns that were similar to those stated about the movement education model.

Play Education

The play education model views play as an essential element that is at the centre of human existence (Jewett & Bain, 1985). Play is described as an activity that is entered into for its own sake but is not frivolous or effortless. The assumption of this model is that one must learn to play and that the role of physical education is to increase a person's tendencies and abilities to play competitive and expressive motor activities (Jewett & Bain, 1985, p.69). The primary objective of the play education model is to increase the learner's approach tendencies to the subject matter and through this instruction to increase skills, knowledge and social behavior, which are the objectives outlined for high school physical education (Borys, 1984; Alberta Education, 1988a; Manitoba Department of Education, 1981). The play education model offers the learners the opportunity to choose the activities in which they wish to participate starting at the grade 10 level where the class becomes fully elective.

Two curricular models, the sports education and multiactivity models (Siedentop, Mand & Taggart, 1986) are encompassed by the play education model outlined by Jewett and Bain (1985). Sports education organizes instruction into seasons instead of units, and within each season organizes the students into teams. Instruction includes both practice and competition sessions and the class is structured into leagues of play culminating in a championship event. The sports education model introduces the students to an organized sport format and encourages the playing of the sports to advance student skills. The multiactivity model organizes students on the basis of their personal activity choices and encourages play of the activities as the method of attaining competence. This model closely follows the play education model which offers the learner the opportunity to choose the activities in which they wish to participate starting at the grade 10 level where the class becomes fully elective.

The Junior-Senior High School Curriculum Guide for Physical Education (Alberta Education, 1988a) is an activity-based curriculum that is based on the multiactivity model of play education. A broad range of activities is available from which physical educators may choose when planning their local curriculum, and the scope and sequence of the activities allows for differences in student development as well as differences in the needs of the

learner. The activity based curriculum model in physical education is also endorsed by other Canadian provinces (Province of British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1980; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 1975; Manitoba Department of Education, 1981; Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1985).

The Alberta senior high school physical education curriculum guide includes seven physical activity dimensions: aquatics, dance, fitness, games A and B, gymnastics, individual activities, and outdoor pursuits. These seven dimensions are the same as the activity dimensions for physical education in British Columbia (1980). The curriculum for Manitoba (1981) sets out eight activity dimensions which rename and re-classify the same activities included in the Alberta guide. A similar situation exists in Nova Scotia (1985) where nine activity dimensions are included with the main difference being the inclusion of a Track and Field and Combatives dimension. The Alberta guide includes both Combatives and Track and Field activities in the Individual Activities dimension.

A balanced activity program offering individual and team sports with equal time allocation for each dimension is required by all provincial curricula. For example, in Alberta the requirements of the core program specify that the seven activity dimensions must make up 80% of the physical education 10 program. The remaining 20% of the

physical education 10 course is the elective component to be allocated by individual schools and physical education teachers for remediation or enrichment of the required core component (Alberta Education, 1988a). The curriculum guide provides a variety of activities from which to choose from within each dimension when planning the physical education program and it provides enough flexibility to allow for teacher strengths and preferences in the selection of activities. This flexibility allows the physical education 10 programs in Alberta to be like snowflakes, no two being identical.

The criticism of the play education model is that play and physical education are essentially different because physical education is not voluntary. Questions are also raised about the relationship between play behaviors learned as youth and activity patterns established as adults, and whether there is a carry over (Jewett & Bain, 1985).

Personal Meaning

The personal meaning model for physical education asserts that for an experience to be educational it must be meaningful and relevant to the participant. The framework for this curriculum model is provided by the Purpose Process Curriculum Framework advanced by Jewett and Mullan (1977). In this framework the content for the personal meaning curriculum is structured in terms of the potential meanings

or purposes of the participants. Instruction is usually organized around specific purpose concepts, either by developing theme units or by teaching sport or dance activity units with an emphasis upon particular purposes or goals. In addition, the "program content is designed to guide students in the processes of learning to move and moving to learn" (Jewett & Bain, 1985, p.75).

Factors Contributing to Student Satisfaction

The contribution of the research by Jewett and Bain (1985) is the identification of various curricular models showing the variety of approaches available to physical educators. The existence of alternative curricular models is important because current multi-activity curriculum in physical education may be inadequate in meeting the diverse needs of the students. Several areas of concern are identified in the current research on teaching in physical education and are of particular relevance when examining the present focus of school physical education programs to clarify why students do not select physical education. Factors which relate to students' perceptions of physical education programs are raised in the literature. These factors are discussed in the following section.

Cardiovascular Fitness

Fitness is an important outcome of the high school physical education program which is included as a required

component of all grade levels (Alberta Education, 1988a; Manitoba Department of Education, 1981; Province of British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1980). Although fitness is identified as an important reason for taking physical education (Butcher,1982; Stewart & Green, 1987; Koslow, 1988a), the methods used to attain cardiovascular fitness are viewed negatively. Research by Chambasian (1987) found that students disliked cardiovascular fitness activities, specifically running and skipping.

Although health related fitness objectives are deemed to be important to physical educators and curriculum planners, the objective of attaining cardiovascular fitness within a physical education class may not be achievable because of the time required and the presence of other objectives in physical education (Koslow, 1988b; Siedentop et al., 1986; Verabioff, 1988). Koslow and Siedentop suggest that cardiorespiratory fitness requires the large muscle groups to be involved in dynamic movement for periods of 20-30 minutes in duration, three or more times per week. The foregoing authors question whether there is enough time in a physical education class to achieve all the objectives of the physical education program. They argue that the focus of physical education classes is so broad that the achievement of the cardiovascular fitness objective jeopardizes the attainment of the other class objectives. Verabioff found that 55% of physical education class time

involves the student in passive activity. He noted that the high intensity activity required to increase cardiovascular fitness levels was not maintained for a long enough period of time to benefit fitness levels.

As students' fitness levels improve, so does the students' level of self-confidence and attitude towards physical education. Steinhardt and Stueck (1986) found that students' self-confidence and attitude towards activity improved with the participants' perceived fitness levels. This improvement in self concept and attitude was supported by Young (1970) as well as Wessel and Nelson (1964) who found a positive correlation between the subjects' level of fitness and their attitude towards physical education.

How students view the fitness objective differs greatly between what they say is important about fitness and what they are prepared to do to achieve fitness. Although the importance of fitness is ranked highly by both parents and students, Chambasian (1987) questioned students about the removal of the cardiovascular fitness component as a compulsory part of the program and found that 91% of the students wanted it removed. This statistic reflects the inconsistency between the student-stated importance of health and fitness benefits and their lack of desire to be involved in activities designed to achieve this objective.

Skill Development

The teaching of motor skills is the most important contribution of the physical education profession. Siedentop et al. (1986) states that physical education must produce measurable gains in the students' performance to justify its existence. An environment that merely encourages the students to attend regularly, to dress appropriately and participate in the class is inadequate justification for physical education in schools. Siedentop's curriculum model focuses on play and sport involvement as a means of achieving the skill objective of physical education. He argues that the students' attainment of sports skills results in increased participation because of the students' satisfaction with their level of proficiency. The research by Carr (1945) and Brumbach and Cross (1965) supports Siedentop's theory. These studies suggest that students who were more skillful had a more positive attitude toward physical education classes. Research findings by Smoll, Schutz and Keeney (1976) and Campbell (1969), however, contradict the previous research findings. In the latter studies no relationship was found between proficiency in an activity and positive attitudes.

Conflicting research results raise questions about the relationship between skill level and attitude toward physical education. Although one of the goals of physical

education is skill development, the attainment of this goal may not positively influence students' attitudes toward physical education classes.

Social Interaction Patterns and Enjoyment

Positive social interaction between students is an important outcome of physical education programs (Alberta Education, 1988a; Hellison, 1985). The students in Butcher's (1982) study gave the following reasons for their involvement in physical education classes: health and fitness benefits, the attainment of sports skills, knowledge, and enjoyment of the class. Ironically, when asked what they liked most about their physical education class, these same students indicated enjoyment, followed by health and fitness reasons and social reasons; the acquisition of sports skills and knowledge was not mentioned.

Students have used the term "fun" to describe one of the important objectives of physical education (Bain, 1980). Bain suggests that students use the term fun, perhaps because of their limited vocabulary, and that enjoyment can imply effort and even seriousness. As Bain sees it, the primary purpose of the physical education program is participation for personal satisfaction and enrichment. Consequently, programs should be evaluated on the basis of their success in achieving the social objective.

Participation patterns and social behavior in physical education classes vary. Griffen (1984, 1985) studied the social interaction patterns of boys and girls during a games unit. Six categories of participation patterns in girls were identified; athletes, JV players, cheerleaders, lost souls, femme fateles, and system beaters. Five participation patterns were found in boys; machos, junior machos, nice guys, invisible players, and wimps. Different groups reflected different levels of skill, interest, confidence, and levels of involvement in the lessons. The various groups in the classes did not interact with all other groups and the distinctions between groups such as the "machos", the "junior machos" and the "wimps" were clearly defined by the foregoing faccors. These group definitions created barriers that inhibited the acceptance of all class members into a positive social environment.

The nature of the task influenced student participation in physical education classes. Student segregation into distinct groups within the physical education class may relate directly to teacher expectations of students. Tousignant and Siedentop (1983) observed that students unable to do a task because it was too difficult, changed their actions and became "involved bystanders." Although they weren't directly involved in the activity assigned by the teacher, they played the system well enough for the teacher not to identify their behavior as inappropriate.

Students conditioned in this behavior assumed the role of bystander in all physical activities, and therefore had a lowered self confidence level concerning their abilities to take part in class activities.

A second group of students identified by Tousignant and Siedentop (1983) modified the task in an inappropriate manner, because either the task was too easy and they were bored, or the task was too difficult so they involved themselves in something else to occupy their time. The teacher observed the inappropriate behavior immediately and the students then modified their behavior. The teachers failure to recognize the "involved bystanders" behavior pattern as inappropriate sent the message that the students' passive, non-disruptive behavior was acceptable therefore encouraging the students to continue with this behavior. Both Tousignant and Siedentop (1983) and Griffen (1984, 1985) reveal the teacher's influence in establishing student groupings within a physical education class, and as Griffin's study shows, these emergent groups discourage the positive social interaction desirable to fulfill the objectives of physical education.

Relevance of the Curriculum

The Personal Meaning model developed by Jewett and Bain (1985) focuses on why students participate in physical activity. This model suggests that students have different

motivations for being involved in activities and, therefore, the learner must be the central focus of the program rather than trying to fit students to one program. Relevance will determine if students stay actively involved in the future. The relevance of activities to students is reinforced by Kisabeth (1986) who found wide variances in the stated purpose for involvement in activities. The importance of relevance is shown in research by Avery and Lumpkin (1987), and Soudan and Everett (1981) which revealed great differences between teachers' and students' perceptions of the objectives of physical education. These variances reinforce the need for mutual involvement in the curriculum process so that the program is relevant to the participants' needs, thereby increasing the probability of continued involvement in physical activity (Jewett, 1984).

In order for the curriculum to be relevant to the students some collaboration between students and teacher must take place in the selection of activities for the class. A variety of activities for physical education classes is required in Alberta schools (Alberta Education, 1988). It is important that opportunities vary in order that individuals can determine which activities are relevant to their lifestyles (Borys, 1984). It is also important because each of the dimensions in the physical education curriculum offers a unique movement experience. Although an attempt is made to ensure variety in programming, the

selection of activities has traditionally been the responsibility of the teacher. This procedure does not automatically ensure that students will have a positive attitude toward their physical education classes. Schempp, Cheffers and Zaichkowsky (1983) studied the effect of student involvement in the curriculum process and its effect on students' attitudes toward their physical education class. They found that more positive attitudes resulted when students were allowed to be involved in shaping their learning situation by selecting some of the activities included in their class.

Gender and Physical Activity

Reasons for being involved in physical activity differ with males and females. Studies show that females value health related fitness and socially oriented outcomes more highly than males (Kisabeth, 1986; Earl & Stennett, 1987). Health related fitness refers to attractiveness, body image, joy of movement, weight control, and circulatory-respiratory efficiency (Kisabeth). Males valued skill development and competition more highly than females (Semotiuk, 1967; Asquith, 1971). Although females accepted competition, they desired less emphasis on competition in their classes (Earl and Stennett; 1987). These findings indicate that males and females differ in their preferred movement purposes and therefore have implications for program development.

Evaluation

Concerns over methods of evaluation in physical education are apparent due to conflicting beliefs about the purpose of evaluation and the method of determining a grade for students. The difficulty that exists in the evaluation of students in physical education is the method used to determine if an objective has been reached. How to determine the weighting given to each of the objectives of physical education, fitness, motor skill development, knowledge, and social skills is a concern. In a monograph prepared for Alberta schools, Ford, Cooney and Susut (1988) state that the purpose of evaluation is to provide students with feedback about how they are learning and to provide teachers with feedback about the program they are offering. They recommend that the provincial guidelines for evaluation be followed. The suggested evaluation guidelines for Alberta junior and senior high schools is as follows (Alberta Education, 1988a, p.15);

a) development and application of physical skills.....20-40%
b) development and maintenance of physical fitness.....15-25%
c) development of knowledge and understanding....15-25%
d) development and maintenance of positive attitudes and social skills.....20-40%

These guidelines are similar to the recommendations found in the Manitoba (1981), British Columbia (1980), and Newfoundland and Labrador (1975) curriculum guides, and they

allow for flexibility in student evaluation because of the range of marks applicable to each of the areas.

Different methods of evaluation are practiced and different emphases are placed on the various components considered for evaluation. A lack of consistency is evident both in the methods of evaluation and the elements to be evaluated. Ford et al. (1988) recommend a balance between subjective and objective methods of evaluation. Researchers are finding that rather than the balance suggested by Ford et al. there is an emphasis on subjective methods determined by individual teachers and this results in a lack of consistency in evaluation criteria (Carre & Lashuk, 1986; Veal, 1988; Siedentop et al., 1986). These subjective measures are based on the student's attitude and effort as measures of proficiency in physical education. Teachers choose this method of evaluation because evaluation of skill is too time consuming, or because the teacher sees no reason for evaluation other than to establish a student grade. The measurement of performance is advocated so that student gains can be monitored. Siedentop et al. (1986) suggest a general lack of rigour in performance evaluation when determining student grades. Results are not used by teachers for the purpose of remediation (Siedentop et al.; Veal, 1988).

Skill development and attainment of knowledge in physical education are directly related to the teacher's

expectations of students' performance in their physical education class. Tousignant and Siedentop (1983), in their study of task structures in physical education, observed that when students were rewarded only for participation, they exerted very little effort to develop increased proficiency in the skill or activity being taught. If the students' marks were based on their performance of a task, they were more likely to stay on task because their performance affected their grade. Tousignant and Siedentop suggest that the teacher's expectations for the students' performance were communicated to the students by what the teacher said and what the teacher did. The students were able to sort out what was important and how they should respond based on the teacher's implicit and explicit statements.

Research shows that teachers have observed a strong relationship between students' effort and their improvement in motor skills (Veal, 1988). The assumption is that if students try harder their skill will improve. As a result teachers use a subjective marking system based on observable effort to grade students on motor skill proficiency. Veal also noted that teachers were reluctant to use normative methods of evaluation because of student differences in maturational rates. Veal concluded that teachers evaluate on effort and participation rather than achievement and skill.

Students and parents may lack knowledge about the physical education evaluation system, which may allow teachers to subjectively determine the students' marks in all categories, including skill, knowledge, attitude and effort, with little or no explanation requested by students or parents. A study by Carre and Lashuk (1986) showed that although students had a general understanding of the grading procedures in their class, their knowledge was limited to the marking categories of skill, attitude and effort, fitness, and knowledge. No criteria for a mark within each of these areas was communicated to the student. Veal (1988) noted that this apparent lack of accountability to students about their evaluation is detrimental to the attainment of the objectives of physical education. The lack of accountability is condemned by Siedentop et al. (1986) as a lack of rigour that stands in the way of successful skill development.

The Teacher

The teachers' personal qualities and their classroom practices influence the students' perceptions and enjoyment of physical education and physical education classes. Rice (1988), in a study of students' likes and dislikes about their teachers found that 70% of the students liked physical education because they liked the teacher. He noted that teachers who were friendly, easy to talk to, took a personal interest in the students, had a good knowledge of the

subject matter and possessed a sense of humor were viewed positively by students. Additional positive teacher qualities included the ability to generate enthusiasm for learning, and to convey a positive attitude toward teaching (Csikszentmihalyi & McCormack, 1986). They state that the positive qualities of teachers are sometimes viewed negatively because they are perceived as being present only to encourage the students to like the teacher. They stress, however, that when the teacher is effective in gaining the students' respect the students not only like the teacher and the class, but enjoy the subject matter as well. Teachers who didn't allow the class to plan activities, used cutting remarks toward the students, showed favouritism toward higher skilled students and didn't participate in the activities with the students were disliked by the students.

Changing teachers' methods of interaction with students affected changes in students' attitudes. Brumbach (1968) studied the change in students' attitudes towards physical education classes as a result of modifying certain teacher behaviors. He found that if the teacher gave more individual attention to each student, participated with the students and gave them more information about the effects of fitness there was a noticeable increase in attitude scores, reinforcing the findings by Rice (1988), and Csikszentmihalyi and McCormack (1986).

Positive student attitudes toward the teacher are translated into positive attitudes toward the subject matter. Consequently the teacher plays a role in changing present negative perceptions of physical education, and encouraging students to continue with physical education. By displaying qualities that are viewed positively by the students, the teacher creates an environment that encourages student involvement, thereby encouraging student enrollment in non-compulsory physical education.

Student Attitudes Towards Physical Education

The literature concerning attitudes toward physical education can be classed into three main areas: (1) studies of general attitudes towards physical education, (2) studies examining the effect of selected variables on general attitudes towards physical education, and (3) studies that determine students' likes and dislikes about physical education and the factors influencing their selection or non-selection of physical education as a school subject.

General Attitudes Towards Physical Education

Physical education attitude inventories have revealed generally held positive attitudes towards physical education. One such inventory was developed by Edgington (1968). A widely used instrument, the Wear Inventory (1950, 1951, 1955) was administered to student populations ranging from grades 8-12 (Hojjati, 1980; Williams & Nelson, 1983;

Williams & O'Neil, 1983; and Poitras, 1984). The statements contained in the Attitude Inventories used to assess the subject's attitude toward physical education refer to the perceived values and objectives of physical education. They are very easy to agree with because they focus on individual health and fitness, an active lifestyle, and the fun/social aspect of being involved with others. However, to assume that these scales can be applied to the student's attitude toward physical education classes is deceptive because all of these components may not be present in all physical education classes.

Impact of Selected Variables On Attitude

A second group of studies, which form the majority of the research completed in the area of student attitudes towards physical education, examined selected variables and their effect on attitudes towards physical education. These variables included fitness levels and physical ability, the amount of input students were allowed in choosing curricular activities, and the change in teacher behaviors.

Fitness and Ability Levels and Attitude. Students' fitness levels influence attitudes towards physical education. Young (1970) as well as Wessel and Nelson (1964) found a positive correlation between the subjects' level of fitness and their attitude toward physical education. Carr (1945) found that students whose marks were A's or B's

displayed more positive attitudes and scored higher on fitness tests than the students whose marks were below the B level. This finding suggests the importance of individual fitness development in physical education classes as a method of influencing attitudes toward physical education classes.

In contrast to the positive influence of fitness levels on students' attitudes toward physical education classes, the relationship between students' ability and their attitude towards physical education classes reveals conflicting results. Although Brumbach and Cross (1965) found that athletes had a higher positive attitude towards physical education than did non-athletes, Smoll, Schutz and Keeney (1976) found no relationship between proficiency in an activity and positive attitudes. This finding contradicts the Brumbach and Cross study and is contrary to a commonly held belief that if students are skillful at an activity they will express a more positive attitude towards that activity than will unskillful students. Campbell (1969) found that although the group of students with the highest overall ability in the activities tested had the lowest score on the attitude inventory, the relationship was not significant. The conflicting results of these studies raise questions about the relationship between skillfulness and attitude toward physical education. One of the goals of physical education is skill development, yet the attainment

of this goal may not positively influence students' attitudes toward physical education classes.

Teachers' Interaction Patterns. A study by Brumbach (1968) examined the effect of modifying teacher behaviors on students' attitudes towards physical education. The modifications included giving more individual attention to each student, participating with the students and giving them more information about the effects of fitness. The findings showed a dramatic increase in attitude scores.

Student Involvement in Activity Selection. Schempp, Cheffers and Zaichowsky (1976) examined the effect of students' participation in choosing their learning activities. Students who had input into determining their class curriculum exhibited more positive attitudes towards the class.

Reasons For Non-Selection of Physical Education Courses

A variety of reasons was given by students to support their decision not to enroll in physical education. Research by Butcher (1976) and MacIntosh (1979) investigated the reasons why students selected or did not select physical education. Butcher's study of grade 10, 11 and 12 females revealed that non-selectors gave the following reasons: a lack of confidence in their physical ability, an unwillingness to exert the effort necessary to achieve the benefits of physical education, a preference for

unorganized, noncompetitive physical activity, and a dislike for certain aspects of physical education classes. MacIntosh's study of grade 8 males and females found that non-selectors of physical education stated they did not want to engage in activities in an environment where their perceived physical incompetency would be exposed and compared to more skillful peers. The studies by Butcher and MacIntosh reflect the importance of the students' perceptions of themselves and their physical abilities as determinants of their level of confidence to take part in physical education classes. The students' statements revealed their perceptions of the atmosphere of physical education classes which deterred them from enrolling in non-compulsory physical education classes. However, these non-selectors of physical education still expressed a positive attitude toward the value of physical education. Their comments indicated acceptance of the commonly held values of physical education, even though their experiences, preferences or aptitudes may have influenced them not to select non-compulsory physical education.

The reasons given for not enrolling in physical education changed as the students progressed through the grades. MacIntosh and Albinson (1982) followed the grade 8 students from MacIntosh's previous study (1979) into grade 11 and found that the reasons for non-selection of physical education after grade 11 were in sharp contrast to the

reasons given in grade 8. The senior high school students reported that their reasons for non-selection of physical education were based on the relative importance of other courses and other academic related matters. The results of studies by Jones (1988) and Gardner et al. (1986) found that students listed other courses as being more important, and they did not have room in their timetables for optional courses. A study by Earl and Stennett (1983) concerned with reasons why students did not enroll in non-compulsory physical education ranked subject priorities and timetable constraints at the top of the list.

Some timetabling difficulties are factors over which physical educators have little control. Although the majority of the studies reviewed showed that the students had a positive attitude toward the values and benefits of physical education (Keogh, 1962, 1963; Butcher, 1976, 1982; Earl and Stennett, 1987), their attitudes did not translate into selection of physical education in their timetable. Timetabling conflicts probably don't account for all the grade 10 students who do not select physical education 20, as an examination of timetables often reveals that either spares or other non-compulsory classes have been chosen by the students where the timetable would have allowed them to choose physical education. For some students, when the timetable choice is between physical education and an academic course necessary for preparation for entry into

post secondary institutions, the choice is effectively eliminated. However, when the choice is between physical education and other non-compulsory options, students, even though they espouse the values and benefits of physical education, may choose other courses of more immediate interest. It then becomes important for researchers to explore students' likes, dislikes and perceptions about physical education so that appropriate program modifications can be made to encourage greater participation in non-compulsory physical education.

Students' Likes and Dislikes

Reasons for students' likes and dislikes of physical education classes vary. The research showed that reasons given by some students for liking certain aspects of the physical education program were the same reasons identified by others for disliking the class (Rice, 1988; Stensaasen, 1975; Figley, 1985; Earl & Stennett, 1987; and Butcher, 1982). Figley (1985) categorized all the reasons for students' likes and dislikes into five broad areas: teacher, curriculum, class atmosphere, peer behavior, and perception of self. Responses pertaining to the teacher and curriculum accounted for over 70% of both positive and negative responses. The "teacher" category included responses about the marking system, the methods of presentation and the teacher's personality. The "curriculum" category contained responses that referred to specific activities taught,

amount of time spent on each activity, examinations, and other items directed at the course offered. Male and female responses differed only in the order of importance, or frequency of responses given to questions of likes and dislikes. Figley's study focused on providing information to physical educators about their programs so changes could be made to better meet the needs of the students. By meeting student needs it was thought that attitudes towards physical education could be positively affected resulting in a decision to continue to enroll in physical education when physical education was no longer compulsory.

Suggested Program Changes

Students not enrolled in physical education classes suggested program changes to encourage them to enroll in physical education. Research by Earl and Stennett (1987) involved students who were enrolled in physical education, as well as students who were not. The students not enrolled in physical education were asked to identify changes they would like to see implemented. They suggested the following changes: offer a recreational activities course, change the marking system by giving priority to the mark allotment for effort rather than skill, allow students to enroll with students of similar attitude and abilities, and encourage teachers to attempt to enhance students' self-concept. These recommended changes, identified by non-selectors of non-compulsory physical education, reflected the

dissatisfaction with the students' past experiences in physical education. Their concerns suggest that present practices in high school physical education classes do not meet the needs of all high school students resulting in declining enrollments. Personal development, both physical and mental, is a goal of physical education (Alberta Education, 1988); however, the results of Earl and Stennett's (1987) study show that the goals are not being met.

Summary

The objectives of physical education as set out in the various provincial curriculum guides were generally accepted by students as important. Research revealed that most students, whether or not they selected physical education, held positive attitudes towards physical education.

Curriculum models, each emphasizing a particular goal or goals, have been developed. The model adopted by Alberta was activity based. It provided some flexibility to accommodate teachers' strengths and preferences as well as students' needs and development.

Factors which suggested that the needs of students were not always being met influenced whether or not they continued in non-compulsory physical education. One such factor was the discrepancy between the almost universally

held belief in the value of fitness and the actual practices incorporated into programs. Other factors affecting students' continued participation were their perceptions of the relevance of the curriculum, their likes and dislikes of activities, the style and personality of the teacher, their assessment of the fairness of the expectations and of the marking system, and the perceived benefits of physical education to their health and lifestyle. Reasons for their likes and dislikes were examined in the optimistic expectation that programs and their delivery might be modified to be more acceptable to students, thus encouraging more of them to participate. Indications that students' needs were not effectively satisfied might suggest that an examination of the orientation of other curriculum models would be fruitful.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the case study methodology and its value as it pertains to the central focus of the study, which is to determine students' perceptions of physical education classes. In addition, the procedures used to collect, interpret and report the data are described.

The Case Study Methodology

The case study method investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life setting using multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 1984). It is a synthesis of data gathering methods which draws together pertinent information about one case of study. Walker (1980) calls the case study "an examination of an instance in time" which allows the researcher to study particular incidents and events to capture and portray those elements of the situation that give it meaning.

Rationale

Case studies are preferred when "how" and "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over the events of the study and when the study focuses on a situation within some real life context (Yin, 1980). Determining students' perceptions of physical education classes required information about how and why

their perceptions were formed. In order to understand the students' perceptions more completely, a number of data gathering techniques were necessary, a characteristic of the case study methodology. The reasons for choosing the data gathering methods used in this study will be discussed in the following section.

Data Gathering Techniques

The data gathering methods deemed to be most useful for this case study were: a questionnaire administered to students, group interviews with students, informal discussions with physical education staff and the counselor and document analysis involving the student handbook. Following is a discussion of each method which outlines why it was chosen and how it was used in this case study.

Questionnaire. The questionnaire was used to gather information from the students about their likes and dislikes of physical education, their reasons for selecting three or five credit options and whether they planned to take physical education 20.

Since the students' viewpoints were important to the study, open ended questions were used to encourage students to respond in their own words and phrases which is important when exploring the context of a situation (Mouly, 1970). This procedure also ensured that students were not limited to a number of pre-determined responses.

Analysis of the questionnaires required that they be separated into four categories based on course credits and gender: male three credit (39), male five credit (72), female three credit (43), and female five credit (41). The three credit student questionnaires were separated from five credit student questionnaires because the issues raised differed between the two groups. The questionnaires were sorted according to gender to ascertain differences between male and female perceptions of physical education classes. Questionnaire results were quantified for each group's responses to each question. The frequency of response was recorded and similar responses were grouped together. For example, two responses from the three credit females, when questioned about why they chose three credit over five credit physical education 10, were "Gym is boring," and "I don't like gym." These responses were grouped together because they represented negative perceptions of physical education classes. After the responses for each of the four sub-groups were classified and recorded, the main concerns or issues were identified and the information served as the basis for the interview guides.

The questionnaire was piloted three times to ensure its readability and comprehension by the students and to guarantee that the questions elicited responses specific to the questions of the study. Mouly (1970), Engelhart (1972) and Evans (1984) stressed the importance of a readable and

understandable questionnaire specific to the level of the subjects. The pilot studies determined that the language and terminology used in the questionnaire was consistent with the students' understanding of the language. Also, the questions included in the questionnaire were checked to ensure that they were congruent with the purpose of the study as suggested by Evans (1984). The length of the questions and the length of the questionnaire were considered in its design. If the questions or the questionnaires are too long the students' interest might be lost (Mouly, 1970; Statistics Canada, 1979).

The questionnaire was administered to 195 grade 10 physical education students, 111 males and 84 females. This constituted the entire grade 10 physical education population. It was administered in the gymnasium during the physical education class periods. Prior to distributing the questionnaire, instructions were given to the students regarding the purpose of the questionnaire and the procedure for completing it (see Appendix A).

Interview. The interviews in this study explored the rationale for student responses to the questionnaire allowing them to elaborate on their positive and negative feelings. When exploring feelings the interviewee is the person most able to tell his or her own story (McMillan & Schumacher, 1984).

The interview is also valuable in order to clarify any misunderstandings on the part of the interviewer or the interviewee. Misunderstandings can be questioned immediately because of the face to face contact of the interview (Brenner et al., 1984).

The "unstructured interview" was used in this study. This type of interview which is open ended in nature has a specific focus, is flexible to allow the interviewer to explore new leads, and allows the informant to elaborate on situations as they come to mind. Although an interview guide was used, flexibility was important because it allowed the subject to shape the content of the interview (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). When the interviewer controls the content of the interview too rigidly, the subjects cannot tell their story in their own words. The unstructured interview is conversational in nature as opposed to the question-answer format of a structured or survey interview (Gorden, 1975).

Group interviews as opposed to individual interviews were used in this study. Group interviews bring together a number of people who are encouraged to talk about the subject of interest (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Group interviews allowed the students to add comments to another student's response, to agree or disagree and to stimulate one another's thoughts through their remarks (Bogardus, 1936; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). As a result of initial probing by the researcher, the informants offered their

comments freely, often in a two or three way conversation. Powney and Watts (1987) suggested that group interviews allowed discussions to develop so that a wide range of responses could be collected. In this way the interview provided more information than if the interviewer had probed for all of the responses in individual interview situations.

One of the weaknesses inherent in group interviews is the possibility of the dominance of one person in the conversation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). It is the researcher's responsibility to be aware of this weakness in order to avert the possibility of the group interview deteriorating into an individual interview with spectators.

Group interviews were conducted involving three to five students in each group. No recommendation as to ideal group size was found in the literature. The group size chosen was deemed by the researcher to be appropriate in order to give each participant an opportunity to contribute his/her views. Nine groups of students were interviewed (33 students), each group representing one of the nine grade 10 physical education classes. Of the nine classes, three were male five credit, two were male three credit, two were female five credit, and two were female three credit.

From each of the nine classes students were randomly selected to form the group to be interviewed for each class.

Selection of individual students was based on the following criteria:

1. Those who indicated their willingness to be involved in the interviews.

2. Those who had the greatest similarity between their responses and the main issues identified through the analysis of the questionnaire administered to their sub-group.

Each student selected for an interview was given a letter of consent that was taken home, signed by a parent or guardian, and returned prior to the interview (see Appendix B).

The interview guide for each sub-group was constructed on the basis of the issues identified by their questionnaire results. The guide ensured that the researcher focused on the issues identified by each group (see Appendix C). All interviews were tape recorded, freeing the researcher to focus all his attention on the informants and providing another source of information that may have been missed if the interviewer had to take notes throughout the interviews (Yin, 1984). These interviews were transcribed and the responses were attributed to the group. Later these interview responses were analyzed.

Each group was interviewed once. A possible weakness of a single interview is that it allows a limited opportunity for the interviewee, given the strangeness of the interview situation, to formulate responses that represented the meanings he or she would want to acknowledge (Ruddick, 1985). A second interview often is necessary because of further questions that arise from analysis of the interview data (Brenner, Brown & Canter, 1985). Because the interviews were conducted in late June, 1986, and the transcription process was not completed until early July, 1986, it was impossible to have a second interview with the subjects. In order to substantiate the results of the study a second set of interviews was conducted in June, 1989 at a setting similar in school size and physical education credit options offered. During the second set of interviews students were asked to respond to questions about the major issues raised by the students in the initial interviews. The results of the second set of interviews corroborated the issues raised by the first group. Data from the second set of interviews are presented in the results only where it differs from the first group.

With the consent of the teachers and students, interviews were scheduled during physical education class time. Two of the group interviews took place in classrooms within the school, while the other seven group interviews took place in the school weight room because no other

private space was available in the school, due to the overcrowded facilities.

Discussion With Physical Education Staff and the School Counselor. Discussions with physical education teachers and the counselor were conducted for the purpose of finding out what information they had given the students regarding the physical education 20 requirements. This was necessary because the information from the student interviews regarding what they had been told about the requirements for physical education 20 was not consistent.

Documents. The school's Program Guide and Student Handbook was examined to corroborate information collected from the student interviews about the requirements for proceeding from three credit grade 10 physical education to five credit physical education 20.

Analysis of Interview Data

The process of analysis included transcribing the audio tapes and identifying the key ideas which emerged from the students' responses. The interview transcripts were read and the major themes were recorded for analysis. A theme was defined as an issue or topic that recurred most often in the students' responses to the interviews. This entire process of reading the interview transcripts and determining the major themes from the students' responses was repeated 10 months later. The two analyses were compared to confirm

the researcher's initial determination of themes. Both analyses revealed identical themes. The analysis of the interview data required the researcher to wade through the pages of transcripts to find what lay at the core of the informants' words. Themes emerced from the transcripts as the researcher interpreted what was being said. In an unstructured interview situation themes may emerge as the researcher tries to answer the question: "What exactly is it that I think is being said here?" (Powney & Watts, 1987, p. 166).

Validity

The validity of the researcher's interpretation of the results is an area of concern in qualitative research. Since the researcher is the only person exposed to all of the data, the presentation of the results and findings relies on the researcher's thoroughness in reporting the information. Hull (1985) indicates that the reporting of the interview as transcribed is merely a partial record of the events of the interview, and he calls this the "first record". Hull refers to the "second record" as the record of what took place in the interview that does not appear on tape or on the written interview transcripts. This second record that Hull refers to states that the interviewer is privy to a "black market record" of the interviews. This knowledge is inherent to the researcher's data analysis as he/she recollects the interviews, the setting, the

informants and the atmosphere that developed within each separate interview. This knowledge poses problems if the reader is presented with a copy of written interview transcripts because the researcher's interpretation of the results will reflect his or her "black market" record. For example one group of five credit males, when asked if they were satisfied with how they were evaluated, looked at each other and shrugged. Further questions were needed to elicit a verbal response. The unrecorded observations alerted the researcher to the students' attitude to the issue and influenced the manner in which the prompting was done to extract further elaboration. The students' responses confirmed the researchers' impressions of their lack of concern with evaluation. Powney and Watts (1987) agree with Hull and suggest that the interviewer add his/her view of the interview to more fully explain what actually occurred. Thus an interpretation is provided that is not readily available to others as 'project data' because it draws on the interviewer's recollection of the event.

> Data analysis and presentation became a matter of finding print passages in the transcript which accurately convey in print what I interpreted retrospectively to have been the interviewees' intended meaning at the time of the events" (p. 29).

The need for the researchers' interpretations to be confirmed by the participants of the study is refuted by Ruddick (1985) and Hull (1985). Ruddick (p. 114) states that because of the researcher's role as a partner in

eliciting and negotiating an agreed text between interviewer and interviewee, the researcher derives an "exclusive authority" over the meanings of the words. Hull identifies a problem associated with having the participants verify the researcher's interpretations.

> It will be noted that the many complex procedures for the negotiation of accounts which have been used to ensure reportage that is faithful to the participant's intended meanings, actually compound the problem that confronts us here (p. 28).

A second concern with the validity of a study is whether the results are generalizable. Stake (1988) contends that a case does not have to be representative of other cases. He notes that a unique case helps us to understand more typical cases. The results of this study are not generalizable because generalizability is the responsibility of the reader who must ask, "What is there in this study that I can apply to my own situation, and what clearly does not apply?" (Walker, 1980, p.34).

Summary

The case study method was used in this study to determine the grade 10 students' perceptions of their physical education classes. This research methodology incorporated the use of multiple sources of evidence: the questionnaire, group interviews, discussion with the physical education teachers and school counselors, and analysis of the student handbook. The questionnaires and

interviews showed what the students liked and disliked about physical education classes as well as information about how the students' perceived themselves in their physical education classes. The interviews provided an opportunity for the researcher to gain an understanding of the students' questionnaire responses because the interview process allowed the students to elaborate and provide detail to their responses. The physical education teachers and the school counselor provided the supporting or contradictory information to the students' comments.

Interviews were transcribed and analyzed according to the main ideas identified by students during the interviews. The results are presented as main ideas or themes, and student dialogue is provided to illustrate these themes.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SETTING

The subjects in this study lived in a suburban community of approximately 38,000 people. The community is an older well-established community which over the past 10 years has increased its population approximately 35-40%. The population is made up mainly of upper middle class professionals, the majority of whom commute to their place of work in a large metropolitan centre. The community contains mainly single family dwellings and all essential services to remain self-supporting. As a result of the increasing population base, construction of additional schools has been necessitated, with two elementary, two junior high and one high school planned to be in operation by 1990. These schools will incorporate the needs of both the public school system and the separate school system.

The school has a student population of 1310 students, 669 males and 641 females, enrolled in grades 10 through 12. The grade 10 student population involved in this study totals 424 students, 206 males and 218 females. The grade 11 population consists of 407 students, 204 males and 203 females, and the grade 12 population is made up of 479 students, 259 males and 220 females.

The high school is the only public high school in the district and services only those students residing in the community. There is no written statement of the school's

philosophy available for the staff or the students. The rules and policies of the school are thoroughly explained to students in the student handbook. The student handbook defines the school as an academic high school offering three main programs: matriculation, general and business. Industrial education, home economics and fine arts courses complement the three basic programs.

The building is a two story structure with the main offices, counseling department, staff room and cafeteria at one end and the two gymnasia at the other end. Large, self-contained central offices are used by the English department, the mathematics department, the social studies department and the science department. The business department is equipped with a central work and storage area. Apart from the regular classroom facilities, the school is equipped with two large computer rooms, a large, well equipped art room, a drama room with a small staging area, a school library, and small automotives, woodworking and drafting areas. Attached to the school are two portable classrooms used mainly by the French department. The addition of these classrooms was necessary because of overcrowding of the present facilities.

The school's physical education facilities include two gymnasia, a small gym and a larger gym, and a weight room on the mezzanine of the smaller gymnasium. The large gym has the capacity for three volleyball courts, six badminton

courts or two cross court basketball courts. The small gym, located just down the hall, has the capacity for two cross court volleyball courts, three badminton courts or one basketball court. The large gym has two offices, one for the male staff and one for the female staff while the small gym has only one office which is shared by all staff using that gym.

The school fields adjacent to the gymnasia include three baseball diamonds, four soccer pitches and two football fields. The physical education program also accesses community facilities within a ten minute walk of the school. This access allows for a wide range of program offerings. Community facilities which are available include an indoor pool, one outdoor and two indoor skating rinks, racquetball and squash courts, a curling rink, a driving range, a golf course, bowling alleys and a man made lake used for canoe instruction.

The school offers three and five credit physical education courses for grade 10 students. There are 181 students enrolled in three credit physical education and 254 students enrolled in five credit physical education. Five credit physical education is the only option for grade 11 and 12 students.

The physical education department consists of seven teachers, four males and three females. Six of these

teachers also teach classes in other departments within the school. The only full time physical education teacher is a male. The teachers' professional training varies; three teachers have Bachelor of Education degrees, three have both a Bachelor of Physical Education and a Bachelor of Education and one teacher has a Bachelor of Education and two years towards a Master of Education degree. The average age of the physical education staff is 33 years and the seven staff members have taught a combined total of 54 years.

All the physical education staff were expected to coach and they received an 80 minute preparation period each day for one semester. Although each physical education teacher received a preparation period for coaching not all coached and this resulted in some friction amongst the staff.

Four members of the physical education staff each coached more than one sport. Only one school team was coached by a staff member not in the physical education department. The school's extra-curricular program also involved six volunteer community coaches. Five of the volunteers served as assistant coaches working with staff members and the other volunteer assumed a head coaching role. The school policy dictated that it was necessary to have a staff member as a sponsor for all community coaches in a head coaching position and in the one instance where this occurred, a physical education teacher assumed this responsibility.

An intramural program that was run during noon hour for the entire year was organized by the physical education department. Since the school's noon break was only 40 minutes long the intramural participation was limited and involved primarily athletes already on school teams. There was no house system or recognition or rewards for involvement in the intramural program. The activities tended to follow the interschool schedule with badminton and floor hockey being the most successful activities offered. Supervision of the noon hour activities was the responsibility of four of the physical education staff.

The interschool program included a wide range of activities for both males and females: volleyball, basketball, gymnastics, tennis, cheerleading, football, rugby, golf, swimming, track and field, badminton, wrestling, curling and cross country running. All programs received strong student support and were successful, some winning provincial championships in both team and individual sports.

Students were exposed to a unique educational experience because of the school's particular mix of students, staff, facilities and programs offered. Although these components combine to provide a unique setting which in its totality differs from any other high school in Alberta, certain components are common to all high schools.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES

This chapter presents the students' perceptions of physical education classes as expressed in their own words and interpreted by the researcher. The students' comments are woven into the researcher's interpretation of the students' perspective of current practices in physical education classes.

The Importance of Health and Fitness

Students' Perceptions of the Importance of Fitness

The majority of the students (87%) indicated that health and fitness was important to them and these were the primary reasons for taking physical education. The students' comments appear to reflect a societal trend towards an increased awareness of health and fitness.

The students' perceptions of fitness exhibit personal goals that are important to each individual. Students' perceptions vary depending on gender and which credit option they have selected. The perceptions of fitness held by males in the five credit course are geared toward sport and a person's condition and ability to compete:

> Being able to do something good sports-wise. Having some stamina. Having the ability to do anything you want and that you can do it well enough so you can compete. Sometimes you don't have the skill, but at least you can put out a good effort with a reasonable amount of fitness.

> Heart rate. Being strong. Not being flabby. Having stamina, endurance.
>
> Sports; how good you can compete. Physical exertion, not lazy.

Other group's perceptions of fitness focused more on participation and effort, as well as on their appearance and feeling of well-being. The female students' perceptions of fitness also reveal their reasons for being involved in physical education:

> Not just looking good or feeling good, but if you decide to do something like an aerobics class or going for a run, that you can do it without killing yourself.
>
> Improving. Your body looks good, feels good, and you are able to do anything you want to do. You have the freedom and control to do things that fatter people can't do. Your body is happy with you. A sense of well-being.
>
> Being able to go out and do a sport and not getting totally tired. You can go out and do things and not be worried about your body not being able to handle it.
>
> Having fun, feeling good about doing a sport. You don't have to be totally muscular or slim, but if you feel good inside when you finish playing. Just participating in anything and enjoying it.

Three credit males echoed these views:

> Getting out, participating and having fun. Yeah, going out and trying, to try your best.
>
> To be fit, not overweight. You can live longer. You can get out and do things.
>
> Not being fat.

Impact of Physical Education Classes on Fitness

Students' comments reflect how they expect to benefit from their physical education classes and identify what is important to them about physical education. Since there are different perceptions of fitness there are also different reasons for being involved in physical education.

Although most students identified the health and fitness benefits as being important outcomes of physical education classes, they believed responsibility for developing fitness still rests with the student, not with the physical education class. One male five credit student stated that the student's effort on daily runs was important: "When we do this daily run, a lot of people don't try. But if you try it really improves your fitness." One of the females in the five credit class identified the student's responsibility for fitness and said "I think it is up to you, though. If you are still going to go home and eat, I don't think that you can expect to be fitter."

Three credit males were very indignant when asked if their physical education classes influenced their fitness levels. They indicated that they played street hockey and participated in other out-of-school activities that kept them fit, and they didn't have to rely on physical education classes to develop and maintain fitness. The three credit males had a much more passive view of fitness than all other

groups. They perceived fitness to mean being active in games as opposed to the other groups who perceived fitness to be closely linked to cardiovascular activities such as running.

Class Length and Fitness Development

Students in three credit classes expressed a dissatisfaction with their 40 minute classes. They indicated that 40 minutes was not enough time to notice any benefits to their personal fitness levels. When asked whether their physical education classes provided them with an opportunity to become fit they responded:

> No, but it's a start. It's better than a lot of people who don't even get out for 40 minutes to do something everyday.

Five credit physical education classes which were held daily for 80 minutes did not guarantee that sufficient time was spent on fitness. One group of five credit males expressed the opinion that in their classes there was an inadequate amount of time spent on fitness to actually make a difference. They admitted, however, that by just being involved in activity their level of fitness was at least being maintained. The male three credit classes also acknowledged this fact:

> I think in phys. ed., like when we went swimming for two weeks, you used different muscles; then you do rugby for two weeks, and you used different muscles. I

> think that phys. ed. adds variety to the muscles used and therefore to my fitness.
>
> ...when we play soccer and are out there running and learning the skills, we are still running and doing something about fitness.

Value of Running as a Fitness Activity

The five credit physical education groups identified running as the major activity contributing to their fitness. The three credit groups expressed the view that gereral involvement in games was most important for their fitness. The only exception to this view was one female three credit class's comment which also identified running as an activity contributing to their fitness. In this particular case, their physical education teacher also taught a five credit physical education class and shared similar expectations for both classes.

The students' perceptions of running and the relative importance of running for developing fitness varied among the three credit and five credit groups. The three credit groups did very little running and described their running as "just a little bit of jogging everyday, one or two laps for warm-up." One exception was a three credit group which ran during most classes, gradually extending their running distances. The approach used in this class presented running as an activity beneficial for fitness and it was not considered an overwhelming task:

Subject: She (the teacher) told us to take it easy and run slow. She didn't care how fast that you ran. Run so you could talk, just as long as you ran.

Interviewer: Did you have trouble running? Did anyone have to walk?

Subject: I walked. A lot of people walked. I felt like I was going to die the first day; everybody did.

Interviewer: Did most people overcome that by the end?

Subject: She was right. She said we would after we got used to it.

This class was encouraged to run and students were allowed to walk, if necessary, in order to complete the task. Running was presented to them as an activity that contributed to their fitness but to reap the benefits they had to persevere. The teacher appeared to give the students the message that the entire class would struggle through this activity together and they would all gain the benefits from their involvement. The teacher of this group also taught a five credit female class. They were challenged to run a 10 km road race with their training geared toward the goal of completing the event. These females attached a great deal of importance to this event. In addition to receiving the benefits of fitness, they also gained a sense of accomplishment by completing the event:

> (the 10km run was) really important because everyone did it and everyone accomplished something. When we talked about it at the beginning, everyone talked about not even being able to do it. I didn't think I could finish it.

The other three credit classes lacked similar reasons to run as well as lacking the knowledge of the benefits of running. In these classes running was done as a warm-up or lead-in to each lesson and was more of a class procedure than an activity intended to contribute to fitness.

> Sometimes when it is cold outside they make us run to get warmed up. When it is hot outside, I don't see the point in running.

The five credit groups, although expressing different opinions of their likes or dislikes about running, appreciated the benefits to their personal fitness. They stated that running was important for their cardiovascular fitness needs, and improvements were noticeable due to their class running program. A five credit male group commented:

Interviewer: What are you told about running, about why you do it?

Subject: Cardiovascular improvements.

Interviewer: Do you notice the improvement?

Subject: Oh, yes! When we go on this daily run, a lot of people don't try. But if you try it really improves your fitness.

One member of a female five credit group concurred with these opinions:

> Because it helps with our heart rate. That is another thing we have learned so much about this year, about how important physical fitness is. This is terrible, but I always go home and tell my dad he is going to die soon because his heart rate is so high. Now I've got him jogging and biking.

The Influence of Knowledge on Attitudes

Although students saw a relationship between fitness and running, running was identified by all groups, except the three credit males, as being the most disliked aspect of physical education. The only group not listing running on their list of dislikes did little running in their class. All the groups experiencing running as part of their class could espouse the benefits of running in keeping them fit. Running, however, was still ranked high on their list of dislikes.

A large gap exists between what the students identify as necessary activity to attain cardiovascular fitness and what they are prepared to do to achieve this goal. Students desire the benefits of running without doing the work necessary to achieve them. The following dialogue with one female five credit group illustrates this gap:

Interviewer: Why do you run?

Subjects: Because we have to. It is also that you feel good when it is finished and you almost say "why do I hate it so much?"

It is really good exercise, some of the best you can do.

It's okay once you get out there. It's hard to get started when you are sitting in the locker room.

Interviewer: Why do you think it is included in the course?

Subjects: Good cardiovascular exercise and it works your muscles. When you play soccer if you can't

run you are in trouble. A lot of sports need running.

Interviewer: Well, you don't like running, but you feel good once it has been done and you have a sense of accomplishment?

Subjects: Oh yeah! That 12 minute run that we did, that we had to do. I felt really good after that and you could see that people were really surprised, "I did it, I did it!".

Only students in classes that included running in their program were knowledgeable about the benefits of running. The more knowledgeable the students were about the benefits of running, the more positive their attitudes were toward running. The classes that were told why running was important were willing to run even though they disliked it as an activity. Those classes that didn't know why they ran, other than to warm up on cold days, saw no purpose for running, and therefore had a different opinion about how to best satisfy their fitness needs.

Student Satisfaction with Physical Education Classes

Student Choice

When students were asked in the questionnaire what they disliked about their physical education course they indicated that they disliked certain activities. These activities varied however, with no activity receiving more than one or two responses. The nature of the students' dislikes ranged from being very general (e.g. "some sports

that we took"), to being specific (e.g. "running", "basketball", "volleyball", "dancing", "hockey", "swimming", "track and field" and "gymnastics"). Although on the questionnaire running, an ongoing activity, was generally the most disliked aspect of physical education, gymnastics received the greatest negative response as an activity unit.

During the interviews, however, no mention was made about disliking any activity. Dislike for an activity resulted when there was no choice in selecting the activity or determining the length of each activity unit. Students' responses about their lack of choice differed between three credit and five credit groups.

Three credit male and female students suggested that some choices were needed in their classes because they felt uncomfortable with some of the activities. For example, the males indicated that they had a choice regarding their participation in the school track meet.

> You could either help out as officials or take part. I think a lot of the kids were too scared to show up. They would be bugged because the whole school was there. They didn't want to rake pits because they would still be bugged because everyone would know they were in three credit for sure.

The female students, on the other hand, had no choice concerning their participation in the track meet.

Interviewer: Were you given a choice of taking part or officiating? (in the school track meet)

Subjects: No. I would have liked to have officiated. I've done that before and would have done that rather than take a zero. That's what I figured would have happened, that the teacher would have said "I know you guys are in this class because you don't really like phys. ed.", and then find other ways for us to take part in it without making us feel uncomfortable.

Not all groups had a choice of activities offered in their classes. A lack of choice, however, was not viewed negatively if the students were satisfied with the variety of activities offered. As a five credit male group commented:

> As long as we get a good variety, I don't mind at all. This year we have done everything from rugby to swimming. We don't spend too much time on each thing, but we did so many things it was fun.

The responses regarding the range of activities in their programs varied with the groups of five credit physical education students. The classes' responses varied according to the teacher teaching them and the program offered.

Interviewer: This year have you been offered a wide variety of activities?

Subjects: We didn't have any choice in what activities we did.

Interviewer: Were you happy with the way the program was offered to you?

Subjects: I think we should have more choice in some of the things we do, but otherwise it is fine.

This class seemed to enjoy the variety but also wanted to determine what was offered.

Situations existed where teachers chose activities based on their personal interests and expertise. Students expressed their dissatisfaction with this situation because they felt it unfairly required them to take part in the teacher's preferred activity for a longer period of time than was spent on most other activities:

> We have no say in what we do. Our teacher tends to lean toward the sports that he likes, like racquet sports. We spent three weeks on badminton. It got boring after the first week or week and a half. We could have spent the rest of the time on activities that the class wanted to do.
>
> He could ask us how long to spend on certain units and it would be his discretion whether that would be good or bad. All different gym classes would tend to lean toward different activities because of their (the students) likes and dislikes.

One of the five credit male classes had both a good variety of activities and a choice of activities offered in their class. The students' role in choosing the activities was very small, but it was enough to satisfy their need to be a part of the curriculum process:

Interviewer: Are you offered a variety of activities?

Subjects: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you have a choice in what you are taking?

Subjects: Sometimes. Some days he will give us an option of three games and we will vote on which one we want to play.

> It's nice to have a say in what you want to do.

The need for variety and choice was reinforced by one of the female five credit classes:

> At the beginning of the year, Miss . . . told us what they usually do and then asked us if there was something that we really wanted to do. Biking was added.
>
> With the running, we had said that she made us run a lot, but we got to choose. We decided we wanted to do a certain run and it was her job to train us for it. That is why we ran like we did.

Although activity choice and variety were identified as important for students' satisfaction with physical education classes, not all students perceived the same need to be involved in choosing activities. Students seemed to look at their own situation to determine whether they were getting "a fair deal." When students believed they were being treated fairly, their satisfaction with the class was evident.

Interviewer: Do you have a choice in the activities that are offered in your phys. ed. class?

Subjects: Not too much. If we have an extra day or something, maybe we will get to do something that we choose.

Interviewer: How do you feel about that?

Subjects: I think our needs are pretty well met, for the most part. Maybe if they gave us too many choices we would get too confused. I like having the units already set up.

Students indicated that the variety of activities offered was the most important variable in determining satisfaction with the class. However, if variety was lacking, as in the three credit classes, a general dissatisfaction was expressed by the students. Choices are important to students; they allow the students to accept the activities more readily because they feel as though they have determined their learning experience. One student noted that having a choice allows the course content to be adapted to the group's interests since each group's interests will vary according to the students involved in the class.

Time Allotment and Course Structure in Three Credit Classes

The three credit physical education group disliked specific activities because of the length of the units and the way the lesson time was structured. Students were dissatisfied with the relative amounts of time spent on skill instruction, skill practice and game playing. For example, one of the males commented:

Subjects: We do skills for four days out of a five day week, then we go into a game, like volleyball for instance. I'm sure all of us know how to do it because we took it all through junior high. So now we spend four days out of the week just learning how to bump it and stuff like that and then we only get one game in.

Interviewer: What would you like to see?

Subject: Being able to play the sport a little more instead of going over the skills. It's the

> same as junior high! We are only in there for 45 minutes and then you spend the whole time working on skills. We are mainly in there for fun too, because it's three credit.

Students enrolled in three credit physical education felt that their classes should be geared more toward having fun which meant playing games, rather than developing skills by spending time on skill instruction. Three credit students identified skill development as an objective of five credit physical education classes and they believed the objectives of three credit physical education were different from the five credit classes. Skill development was a source of their resentment. Ironically, students enrolled in three credit physical education wanted to spend more time playing games, but the 40 minute classes did not allow for this to happen whereas the 80 minute classes in the five credit course provided the time. Also, the major reason for not taking five credit physical education was the emphasis placed on skill development. Consequently, the time restrictions of the three credit class placed the three credit physical education students in a no-win situation because their purpose for taking physical education was not being met by the objectives of the course.

Both the three and five credit students, when commenting on the three credit class, mentioned that the 40 minutes allotted for each class period limited the activities that could be offered. The five credit students listed the lack of variety as a reason for not taking three

credit physical education. Tennis, racquetball, swimming and skating were included in the five credit physical education class but, with the exception of swimming, these activities were not part of the three credit physical education class. These activities were excluded from the three credit class because they required too much travelling time to get to the facility, which resulted in too little time spent engaging in the activities. For example, one three credit group of males commented:

> You get changed, then are in the water for 10-12 minutes and have to get out.

The range of activities offered to three credit students was therefore determined in part by the time allotted for the class.

Interviews conducted in June, 1989 with students in a similar setting, identified differences in the organization of the three credit physical education class. In the comparison school three credit classes were scheduled on alternate days for 80 minutes per class. The 80 minute classes provided the students with the opportunity to take part in activities offered at facilities outside the school which provided more activity options for this group than were available to the initial research group. The 80 minute classes may have eliminated some of the concerns about three credit physical education classes expressed by the initial research group. Although the length of classes differed for

the two groups, the comparison group was dissatisfied with having physical education only on alternate days and indicated that 80 minutes every day would have been better; therefore five credit physical education would have been a more satisfying choice for them.

Student Evaluation

Importance of Evaluation. Males and females differ in their perceptions of the importance of evaluation systems used in their physical education classes. Both three and five credit females said that one of the things they liked about their grade 10 physical education class was the emphasis on awarding marks based on effort rather than ability. Unlike the females' comments, the males made no comment about evaluation which suggests a general acceptance of the marking system or that it was unimportant when identifying positive and negative aspects about their class. Apparently the activities and games included in the male classes were considered more important than grading. The females preferred evaluation based on attitude and effort rather than skill because it created a non-competitive environment which encouraged them to try the activity. To them the development of specific sports skills was of secondary importance.

Criteria Used in Evaluation. The marking system was accepted by the students in all the credit courses, even

though they couldn't state the criteria used to arrive at the precise percentages applied to the evaluation of skill, knowledge, effort and attitude. The actual percentages assigned to each area varied among classes. The students knew that the largest percentage of their mark was determined by their effort and their attitude because this information had been made available to them by their teacher at the beginning of the semester. Also, the students were aware of their general standing in the class at the time of the interviews, but they had no idea how their specific mark had been established as far as percentages in each of the areas.

The five credit male classes identified that the majority of their mark was based on attitude and effort and they expressed a general acceptance of the marking system.

> I think 25% toward fitness, 25% knowledge and 50% participation. Most of it is for effort and I think that is a good idea because if a kid is trying hard he should be rewarded.
>
> In a way it's not good because when you go to university with an 83% and are basically a "tool" (a person who is not adept at physical education), just because you had effort and got a higher mark and some other guy comes in with a lower mark and is a better athlete. There might be a problem there.
>
> You couldn't do that well if you didn't have the skills and were well rounded. I think the 50% is great.
>
> That 50% is free. You get it at the beginning of the year and then it goes down. If you don't come changed you lose something like 5% each time. For the guys who skipped swimming and skating their chances of passing are nil.

Grading students on their ability in comparison to the ability of their classmates was viewed negatively. This type of norm-referenced evaluation segregated the students in the class according to ability. Students were negative about their junior high physical education experience because of the norm-referenced evaluation which judged them in relation to their peers.

> The opportunity is there for us to improve and to push ourselves to the limits, but they are our limits, not limits imposed by the teacher. Last year when we did fitness testing we were measuring up to someone else's standards. If you couldn't get an excellent in everything, they really put you down. It was degrading to be told you couldn't do something.

When students were judged in relation to their own ability they were not threatened, and consequently positive student interaction took place. Students were encouraged to try their best, which was reflected in the marking system for the class. Only one class identified that they were marked in comparison to their peers, and consequently, this class of three credit females didn't feel that there was much social interaction in their physical education class, which resulted in a poor class atmosphere.

Other groups commented on skill-based marking indicating that the students were graded on their own ability and personal improvement. Some students suggested that the teacher knew their potential and that the students were marked on how successful they were in achieving it.

Marking systems based on effort and attitude were viewed positively by the students and were identified as being opposite to the marking system used in junior high school.

The only negative response to the marking system was the conflict between what was said and what was done by the teacher. In one female three credit class the students were told by the teacher that the marking system emphasized effort and participation and de-emphasized skill performance. However, in practice this was not found to be true.

> She (the teacher) said with gymnastics that if we even tried you could get up to five marks for it, and if you even made the effort you could get one mark automatically. But, like there are only so many things a person with no background in gymnastics can do and even if you do get out there and try everything, there is always going to be something that you can't do. You look at your list and your lack of ability chops away at the list until finally you are working out of 65 marks. You try to do the stuff and you are getting one for this and one for that. Before you know it you have failed.

This group of females who had received a failing grade on the skill component of their gymnastics unit, expressed dissatisfaction with the marking system, and indicated that they did not believe they were getting a fair deal from their teacher. Their dissatisfaction with the teacher and the physical education class was increased as a result.

The idea of being evaluated on the criteria of skill was problematic because of the various ways evaluation was

carried out. Students reported that their skill mark was based on one of the following criteria: improvement, student potential as judged by the teacher, their level of skill in relation to the other students in the class, and whether or not they tried to do their best. All of these criteria were mentioned by students in response to how they thought the teacher evaluated their skill level. The students' comments again reflect their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with being given "a fair deal" by the teacher. The majority of the students were satisfied with their marks in physical education and therefore did not push to find out precisely how their skill mark was determined.

The three credit females who were dissatisfied with the marking had a solution:

Interviewer: Do you feel that you should be evaluated on the skills you learn?

Subjects: Yes. But it depends if you are good at it or not. If you feel comfortable being evaluated on basketball skill, then fine. But there are going to be a lot of people out there who aren't happy with that and they will want to be evaluated on something else. It just seems that it is so inconsistent and they don't make any allowances for things. It's like "you are on the line and that's that".

The whole system of A to F has always bothered me because I don't think that it really honestly marks you. You should, at the beginning of the year, be able to set your own goals about how good you want to be at something and then not be compared to the other people. How hard can it be for a phys. ed. teacher to hand out pieces of paper that ask you to write down your personal goals? Then at the end of the year, evaluate yourself

> and find out if you have lived up to your own expectations. If you haven't, then be marked on that. If you've almost made it and have really made a good effort, then great! But what's the point of comparing me and (another girl) when she's totally better at other things and we are totally different people. Her expectations for herself are totally different than mine for me, so why should we be marked the same?

Marks and Student Motivation. Getting high marks is not the prime motivation for students taking physical education, although getting high marks helped the students feel successful. This success helped to reinforce to the students that effort is rewarded more than skill. Consequently students were allowed to succeed in their physical education classes regardless of their ability, which helped them feel positive about physical education classes. By placing the emphasis on students' efforts rather than evaluation of performance, the fear of failure was taken away. This emphasis transformed the physical education classes from an arena for performance to an arena for play.

Interviewer: What are your marks right now?

Subjects: 78; 82; 82.

Interviewer: Are you satisfied with those?

Subjects: Oh, yeah! I wasn't outstanding in anything, but I just tried and I got a great mark.

Another student's response was:

Interviewer: Were you deserving of that mark? Did you work for it?

Subject: Yes, I guess so. I didn't really expect that high of a mark because I'm not really good at a lot but I try.

Both the three and five credit females, and the three credit males noted that trying and making the effort was rewarded with a good mark. These students attributed their high mark in physical education to their effort rather than to their skill development or expertise in the class activities. Although the five credit males were marked according to the same criteria, they attributed their high marks to their skill and expertise in class. Their perception reflects the traditional "macho image" of success for males that personal ability is responsible for feelings of success.

Marking System and Class Atmosphere. The class atmosphere is determined in part by the marking system used in the class. The female five credit class which was marked more on skill and ability had a competitive atmosphere, while the other five credit female class stressed a cooperative class atmosphere, the marking system rewarding a positive attitude as opposed to high level skill development.

> ...I know a girl who was in the class last semester. She is a really good athlete, but she didn't get a good mark because she had an attitude problem. I think (our teacher) marks us almost entirely on participation and attitude and coming to class.

Both of these marking systems were seen as positive by the students involved in each class and apparently the individual teacher's approach to evaluation had been successful even though the methods of evaluation differed. This success must be attributed to the attitude of the teachers, their relationship with their students, and the communication of their expectations to the students.

Interaction Patterns and their Effect on Class Atmosphere

The atmosphere in physical education classes is largely determined by the presence or absence of specific groups or cliques within the class. The atmosphere can be very accepting revealing the absence of definite groups, or very exclusive indicating the presence of groups or cliques in the class. The three credit female classes and the male classes identified specific groups within their classes. The five credit classes identified at least three specific groups:

Subjects: Oh, definitely. I think there is about three. The bangers and the wimps, the jocks, and the middle group.

Interviewer: Do these groups interact positively in your class?

Subjects: The middles and the jocks are okay, but the losers don't interact with anybody.

The presence of groups within the physical education classes determines the interaction patterns between students

in the class. The groups, identified as bangers, wimps, losers and jocks, seem to be defined on the basis of social interests and abilities in physical education or sports. However, another student's comments showed that the barriers to interaction were not the names or images attached to each group, but the lack of effort exhibited by the "losers" group.

Interviewer: Are you happy with the effort that everybody in your class puts out?

Subjects: No. Some people just stand there. They don't get involved.

Interviewer: Overall, do you enjoy the atmosphere of the class?

Subjects: Yes. There are some people who get abused a bit, but they are the people who don't try or don't want to try.

A lack of effort by students was identified by all groups as the basis for group segregation and lack of group interaction in physical education classes. The students understood that anyone could succeed in physical education. All they had to do was "show up, dress up, and stand up" (Tousignant & Siedentop, 1983, p.54). The students who didn't even try were viewed negatively because they didn't contribute to the success of the class.

> ...you'd be on a team and trying to do something but your teammates wouldn't back you up because they wouldn't try.

Based on the marking system employed in these classes this type of attitude was seen as unfair because it undermined the efforts of others.

> If half of the girls want to stand there and swing the racquet a bit and they get credit for changing and get credit for standing out there doing that, you don't get any encouragement to go out there and try to be better.

With the exception of this group of "non-triers", an overall positive attitude was held toward student interaction and socializing in physical education classes.

Interviewer: Is it different in phys. ed. as compared to other classes in the way you get to meet people and in your interaction?

Subjects: I think it is a lot more social, a lot more chance to have fun. You get to see what the other person is like, to see their personality.

There appeared to be something about the physical educaticn classes that allowed the students to get closer to each other and enjoy the interaction with the others in the class.

The only group not to mention the groups within their class was one of the five credit female classes. These students saw their class as "one big happy family" where it was "one for all and all for one."

Interviewer: What do you really like about your phys. ed. class?

Subjects: The people in it, the friends. How we can all stay together. We can laugh together at each

> other and when one person does well we all support that person for doing well.

The students observed that this group closeness was encouraged by the teacher, but they attributed the success of this closeness to the students in the class:

> ... this type of gym class is better for peoples' attitudes. Last year people who were athletic, or the teacher liked them, they got high marks and they thought, "I'm hot and you are scum". In this class, it is like we are all equal and sort of a big family, and I think it sort of helps peoples' attitudes when they grow up.
>
> We learn to encourage each other when we are doing sports. It's not like, "Hey, I'm going to beat you!" It's more like, "Hey, let's all do this together".

This class exhibited an interaction pattern of true cooperation. It was evident when interviewing this group that there was a total acceptance of each others' strengths and weaknesses, and that this environment was very successful in forming a positive attitude toward physical education. These students credited their classmates with this success.

Subjects: Maybe it was the group.

Interviewer: How does this develop?

Subjects: We socialized a lot, got to know people a lot. We worked together. I've developed a lot of friendships. I'm really glad I have.

The other five credit female class identified a more competitive atmosphere in the class with two distinct groups, the super athletic and the less athletic. The

interaction between the groups was positive and the competition was not seen as a barrier between the two groups. Students in this class viewed their class as competitive but the competitiveness did not interfere with positive class interaction.

> Our class is very competitive. People who aren't so good don't feel too afraid about it. I certainly have my strengths and weaknesses, but when I'm feeling weak in an area I don't mind too much.

This competitive class atmosphere was confirmed by other statements made by the members of the group when talking about their class. The students viewed their class atmosphere positively, even though their class atmosphere differed from the other five credit female class's cooperative approach. The positive feelings of both classes were attributed to the teachers and the communication of their beliefs and expectations to the students. Both learning environments were accepted by the students and were non-pressured, each aiming at slightly different goals. The students acknowledged that class differences were due to the unique abilities and interests of their respective teachers. They recognized their teachers' strengths and weaknesses and accepted them.

Research conducted with a second group of students in a similar setting contradicted the views of the original research group. The comparison group indicated that class interaction patterns were very positive and they noted a

lack of specific cliques or groups within their physical education classes.

Challenge in Physical Education Classes

Students identified the need to be challenged by their physical education classes as one of the most important factors in determining their satisfaction with their physical education classes. The students defined the term challenge in two ways, challenge to perform, and personal challenge to try new activities. The first was related to personal challenge where individuals challenged themselves to do their best resulting in personal improvement and earning a good mark in physical education. Most of the students pointed out that this challenge was their responsibility, but they credited the teacher with fostering and encouraging it. One of the five credit male groups said that their teacher expected more from them if they had the ability and this was a challenge for them. In contrast, one of the three credit female classes identified a lack of challenge in their class which resulted in the students disliking their physical education class. The students in the class that lacked challenge pointed out that the teacher did not encourage them to challenge themselves, and although they respected this teacher as a person, they had lost respect for her as a teacher because of her failure to meet their expectations. The students believed that the

teacher's expectations were low and therefore she did not encourage the students to challenge themselves.

The second definition of challenge occurred when the students were offered new activities, or they lacked proficiency in an activity. This type of challenge motivated the students to try to improve and learn and was present in the five credit courses because of the greater variety of activities than was present for the three credit classes. For example, one of the females in the five credit class that ran the 10 km road race stated:

> We also did the mile swim, which I wasn't crazy about. But now that I look back I think "Well, that's another thing that I've done!". We have also run 10 km. At the beginning of the year if someone had told me that by the end of the year I would have run 10 km, and swam one mile, I probably would have told them they were crazy. We have accomplished a lot and I think that is neat.

The importance of a challenge in physical education classes was that it allowed students to be kept on edge, motivated and interested in the class. It also encouraged them to find out more about themselves and their physical limits. The resulting sense of pride exhibited by the students illustrates the importance of a challenge in maintaining student interest. For the most part the physical education classes fulfilled the students' needs for challenge and therefore the students' satisfaction with physical education was high.

Physical Education as a Break

Students indicated that physical education classes were important because they provided them with a break in the day, a chance to relax and a time away from all the "mental" requirements of their other courses. The term "break" meant different things to different students. Some students felt that the physical education class gave them an opportunity to enroll in a class that had no homework requirements. These students looked at physical education classes as a time to play, a time without all of the responsibilities and demands of homework and "book learning." Other students looked at physical education classes as a chance to get recharged for the rest of their classes. To these students physical education classes gave them an opportunity to clear their minds before getting back to the "academic grind" of their other courses.

The descriptions of physical education as a break refer to the freeing experiences associated with physical education. The students' appreciation of the chance to become active as opposed to using only their minds emphasizes the importance of physical education classes.

> ...you just have to use your body. It's not relaxing but it's fun and there is no homework. You don't have to think too much really.
>
> Because you are not thinking. It gives your brain a break.

> Well, I have social (social studies) and math before lunch, then I come in here and I can use my body instead of my mind. It is a great break.

Physical education classes, in addition to providing a mental break, gave students a chance to have fun.

> It is a chance to have some fun during school. I have social (social studies) right after this and social is a real drag. I figure that phys. ed. gets me a little "off the ground" so I can handle the class.

Some students enrolled in physical education because it offered a break from their heavy schedules and it didn't have homework requirements.

Students who viewed physical education as a break had an aptitude or interest in physical education and enjoyed being in the class. Some students who had enrolled in the three credit physical education lacked interest in physical education and gave other subjects a higher priority. A student who disliked physical education did not view it as a break in the day but as a chore, just as some students had viewed social studies as a chore.

Reasons for Selection of Credit Options

Selection of Three Credit

Priorities and Timetabling. Students specified that the primary reason for enrolling in three credit physical education classes was their inability to fit five credit

physical education into their schedule due to conflicts with other courses. The student comments during the interviews indicated their priorities placed other courses ahead of physical education. For these students, had five credit physical education been offered during another period they may have taken it. The critical variable was whether the courses scheduled opposite physical education were of higher priority to the students. For example, students who wished to enroll in computer or business courses or students who needed all three sciences were unable to enroll in five credit physical education because of timetabling conflicts.

Perceptions of Abilities. In addition to scheduling conflicts, students selected three credit physical education based on their perception of their abilities and the demands of three and five credit physical education courses in grade 10. Students needed to feel accepted by their peers. This feeling is especially strong in physical education because it is a performance-related class which requires students to perform, with various degrees of success, in front of their peers. Students' perceptions of their ability was an important factor that affected their decision to choose three or five credit physical education. Students who felt uncomfortable with their abilities or those who thought that they might be put down by their classmates in a five credit class, chose to take three credit physical education. They believed that the three credit class would provide a less

threatening environment for them because of their perceived lack of ability.

These students' comments indicated that they believed five credit physical education in grade 10 would be beyond their capabilities. The following comments show their concern: "I was told by the teachers that you have to be good to take five credit"; "Five credit was a lot of running"; and "I'm not athletic."

Class Atmosphere. Students perceived a difference in the atmosphere of three and five credit classes where ability level was identified as an important determinant of their acceptance by their classmates:

> Well, there is a split in the kids too. In three credit, I get along with everyone in the class. In five credit, I don't think I would. In three credit, some of the kids aren't as good as the other kids and they don't get bugged very much or put down as much as they would in five credit.

These comments suggest that the students' perceptions about the class atmosphere is a factor in their selection of three credit physical education.

Reasons for Selection of Five Credit Physical Education

Students' selected five credit physical education for the following reasons: the variety of activities offered, class length (80 minutes instead of 40 minutes), the challenge of five credit, enjoyment and a prerequisite for

physical education 20. The students' comments suggest a concern for the course content as well as a desire to be challenged by their grade 10 physical education class.

> I wanted to do more things. There is more time available to you because of time. We have 80 minutes and three credit only has 40 minutes.
>
> I found out that I had to go into a five credit class if I wanted to go into phys. ed. in grade 11.

Basis for Course Selection. The students' knowledge of three and five credit physical education in grade 10 was based on the information they received from their grade 9 teachers, older brothers and sisters, friends already in high school and the high school counselor who came around to the junior high schools to help prepare the students for high school registration. The information the students received was evaluated according to the perception of their own abilities. The following comments illustrate the information students received about grade 10 physical education from their grade nine teachers and the high school counselors.

> They were trying to scare us in grade 9. We were running hurdles in track and they told us that when we got to high school that we would have to do it a lot better and that the hurdles were twice as high. When I got here I found that to be untrue.
>
> ...that five credit was harder, for people who wanted to do gym. Three credit was for people who wanted their gym credits but didn't want to do gym.
>
> My gym teacher didn't say anything about it. Our counselor told us he took five credit all through high school and that we should take it. He said that with

> three credit the classes were shorter and by the time you got changed there wasn't time to do anything so it was useless.
>
> ...(our teacher) said it was harder (five credit), that it was more involved and not quite so casual.
>
> The counselors from (the high school) came around. We found out that there were two choices, a three credit and a five credit course. You should take the three credit course if you are really not at all active and the five credit course if you are active.
>
> It seems like the five credit is a more serious type of course and the three credit is done for fun.

Teachers and counselors made a distinction between three and five credit physical education which was subsequently internalized by the students and then cross-referenced with their perception of their abilities and needs in physical education. Therefore, the students' perceptions of their abilities at the completion of grade 9 affected their future involvement in high school physical education classes. The information provided reinforced that students' choice should be based on their ability or their willingness to work hard. Coupled with the comments that high school physical education is harder, it is understandable why students who have a low perception of their ability choose three credit over five credit physical education 10.

One group of three credit students suggested that the three credit physical education class should be structured in order to develop a positive self-concept in the students enrolled:

> If they have to have a three credit class, then it should be for people to try and increase their opinions about themselves, to try to make them feel better about being in a phys. ed. class. It should be like a stepping stone for a lot of people so you could go from there and then take phys. ed. 10 and phys. ed. 20 instead of.... For so many people the class just ends because it doesn't make you feel better about yourself.

Student Images

Three and five credit physical education classes conjured up different images of students who would enroll in them. Five credit students were viewed as jocks while three credit students were labeled as wimps, nerds, bangers, losers and fat girls. From the three credit students some of the comments were:

> I heard that all the jocks took five credit and all the nerds and wimps took three credit.
>
> ...(three credit is for) someone who doesn't like gym, just taking it for the credits, not very good at it or someone who can't fit it in, or someone who doesn't want phys. ed. for 80 minutes or doesn't like it too much.
>
> The super jocks are usually in five credit.

The comments of the three credit students were reinforced by the five credit students.

> There is an image attached to those (students) in three credit. If you take a look at most people here, and hot everyone here is a jock, but I'd say there are more winners here. More people who have a good attitude and people who are better at sports. There are losers in this class, but not as many as in three credit.

One of the female students commented:

> .....Three credit has been called "fat girls' gym" and that is what kept us away from it.
>
> Some people say that three credit is for bangers and fat people.

The images identified by students had negative connotations. However, the images were always attached to the "other group", and no students were willing to place themselves in a category to which the image applied. The establishment of images was a form of labeling, and students labeled others, never themselves. The term "jocks" applied to the athletically elite. Interestingly enough, no students classed themselves as "jocks" but rather as "athletic." The implication is that students of all ability levels need to maintain contact with their peers rather than distance themselves from the group. The athletically elite students attempted to refute the "jock" label with which they were associated.

> We are no more jocks than those (students) in three credit. We are considered "athletic" not "jocks."

Students indicated that their perception of three and five credit physical education students changed after they had completed the course. Although the labels attached to three and five credit students remained, they were less strong than originally stated.

> I know a lot of people who are quite jockish who are in three credit just because they have different interests in the school toward other classes. They still enjoy gym but got stuck in the other class (three credit).

> There is a real misconception. There are a lot of people in our gym class who are not jocks and I don't know how people decide.
>
> It kind of changed from grade nine to grade 10. In grade nine it is more jocks and stuff, but in grade 10 it is more if you enjoy phys. ed., then good for you. Nobody else is really pressured to go either way.

Course Experiences and Students' Perceptions

The change in students' perceptions of physical education classes resulted from their first hand experience in tenth grade physical education. These experiences provided them with "insider's information", information that was unavailable to them at the time they selected their high school physical education course.

Perceived Ability Changes. Some of the students' opinions about their abilities changed after completing the three credit course. Following completion of physical education 10 most three credit students maintained their belief that ability was the most important factor in influencing course selection. In contrast, the students completing five credit physical education no longer saw ability as a criterion for enrollment in five credit physical education. These students identified student attitude and effort as being more important qualities than ability. The three credit students who had the greatest ability in relation to their classmates agreed with the comments made by the five credit group. These three credit students' comments illustrated a change in perception based

on their most recent experiences in physical education classes and they expressed a willingness to take part in a five credit class if given the opportunity.

Students' perceptions of their ability changed after having had a chance to compare themselves with others whom they had considered of equal ability. The students' comments identified an ability continuum, and their position on this continuum was determined by their perception of their abilities coming out of grade 9. Students chose to enroll in three credit physical education because they perceived their ability to lie at the low end of the ability scale. The same students, however, were now able to see that they were at the top end of this scale in their three credit class. A change in their perception of their abilities allowed them to feel confident enough to take part in a five credit class with students they originally rated at the top of the ability scale. The student's self-concept was constantly influenced by his/her experiential background and success.

Interviewer: Coming into grade 10, what did you think (about your abilities)?

Subjects: I thought for sure I was going to be the worst person in my gym class. I think a lot of people are really self conscious about how good they are and those people are likely to go into three credit just so that they are not going to be put down. That's what they think will happen in five credit.

Course Selection. When asked what information they would give grade 9 students on which to base their decision when choosing grade 10 physical education, the students provided information that differed greatly from the information they had when they made their choice. Their decision to take three or five credit physical education was based on ability or perceived ability. After completing the course, both three and five credit students said they would tell grade nine students to base their decision on like or dislike of physical education. The three credit students said that although they would still tell grade 9 students to base some of their decision on ability, attitude was also important.

> Some guys who are good athletes or good runners, I would tell them to take five credit... I would also base it on attitude. If they were good but still didn't want to go to phys. ed. I would tell them to take three credit. Some people who aren't as good but they like phys. ed. a lot, they should go into five credit.

> I would tell them (grade nine students) that they should take five credit phys. ed. if they like phys. ed.... not based on ability.

Students indicated that effort in physical education is one of the most important considerations when selecting three or five credit physical education. If the students were unwilling to exert sufficient effort then they were steered away from five credit classes.

> Their choice (grade 9 students) should be based just on attitude. You get people who may not be very good, but

> they really try and so they contribute. If you are not going to try, even if you are good, don't bother with five credit phys. ed.

Students enrolled in five credit physical education 10 stated that grade 9 students should make their decision about which course to take based on their attitude and their willingness to try, not on their ability level. This recommendation represented a change from their basis for selecting five credit physical education. This change reflected the students' first hand look at physical education 10 classes which removed their fear of where they would fit in and how well they would be accepted by their classmates.

> If they want gym to be fun and not a chore, take five credit. They also have to be willing to work at it.
>
> Even people who don't enjoy phys. ed. in grade 9, because I didn't enjoy phys. ed. in grade 9, I would still tell them to take it (five credit).
>
> ...if they like gym they (grade 9 students) should take five credit because most of your mark is on how hard you try. If you don't like it you are not going to try.

Basis for Selecting Physical Education 20

The majority of five credit grade 10 students planned to enroll in physical education 20. Their comments expressed their views of the importance of physical education to their fitness and emphasized the positive aspects of enjoyment and socialization. The 15% who indicated that they would not proceed to physical education

20 cited scheduling difficulties as their reason for discontinuation.

The students who had no particular interest in physical education, and had taken three credit physical education 10 only because it was a necessary diploma requirement, did not consider taking physical education 20.

Students' Understanding of the Criteria for Physical Education 20

Students in five credit physical education identified five credit physical education 10 as the pre-requisite for continuing to physical education 20. This pre-requisite eliminated the opportunity for three credit students to take physical education 20.

Interviewer: Can anyone that takes phys. ed. three credit take phys. ed. 20?

Subjects: No. Only five credit grade 10's can go on.

Interviewer: How do you know that?

Subjects: We were told that when we were given our timetables. We were given that choice. A lot of people had trouble fitting it in (five credit), but they had to because they wanted to take grade 11 phys. ed.

Another student's comments provided similar information, but a different source for the information was identified.

Subjects: I found out that I had to go into a five credit class if I wanted to go into phys. ed. in grade 11.

Interviewer: Who told you that?

Subjects: Our guidance counselor.

Students enrolled in five credit physical education stated that students taking three credit physical education could not go directly to physical education 20 without first taking five credit physical education 10.

> I think they have to take grade 10 five credit first if they want to go on.

Sources of Information

The five credit and three credit groups identified a number of different sources of information regarding the requirements necessary to pass from three credit physical education 10 to physical education 20. The teacher was cited as the central source of information, although each of the four teachers of three credit classes had provided different information to their students. Other sources of information accessible to the students, the guidance counselor and the handbook, provided conflicting information.

The Teacher. According to the students' comments the teacher was identified as the most important source of information about the prerequisites for physical education 20. The information supplied to one of the three credit

female physical education classes by their teacher shows the requirements necessary to pass from three credit physical education 10 to physical education 20 were arbitrarily set by each teacher.

> Our teacher said, if you wanted to take phys. ed. next year that we didn't have to take phys. ed. 10 (five credit), that we could just go on to phys. ed. 20 as long as we had 60%. She kept saying we were better than some of her five credit classes and that our whole class could go on. She also doesn't agree with three credit phys. ed. and that everyone should have to take five credit.

The comments from another group:

Interviewer: Do you know what the requirements for passing from three credit to five credit are?

Subjects: In the 80's or 75 or something like that.

Interviewer: Where did you find out those figures?

Subjects: Mr. . . . told us. I think the handbook said that also.

Interviewer: Do you also need approval of your teacher?

Subjects: Yes.

One teacher indicated that students were told a mark of 70% was necessary in order to take physical education 20. This information differed from the 60% figure the students said they had received from this teacher.

The Counselor. The high school counselor was consulted because the counselling department visited the various junior high schools in the spring to inform students of the course requirements. The counselor reported that the

students are told three credit physical education is a terminal course, and that three credit students can not take physical education 20. However, if students received a mark of "about 75%" and had the permission of the teacher they would be permitted to take physical education 20 if they wished to. Also, if the student could only take three credit physical education because of scheduling conflicts, they would be permitted to take physical education 20 if they requested. If the students really enjoyed physical education 10 and wanted to enroll in physical education 20, they would be allowed to continue with the permission of their teacher. The counselor identified a number of exceptions to the guidelines that had originally been communicated to the students. However, these exceptions were not communicated well to students in three credit physical education classes.

One group of males identified the high school counselor as another source of information about the requirements to pass from three credit physical education 10 to physical education 20. The information received from the counselor conflicted with that received from their teachers.

> You have to get your teacher's approval and have over 80% in your class. The (high school) counselors told us that when they came to our school last year.

Student Handbook. The student handbook, which outlined the school policies for students and course requirements,

indicated that physical education 10, 20 and 30 were a progression, with five credit physical education 10 a prerequisite for physical education 20, and physical education 20 a prerequisite for physical education 30. The physical education 10 three credit course was listed as a terminal course and no optional pathways were shown for continuing in physical education.

Interviewer: Do you know what the requirements for passing from three credit to five credit are?

Subjects: In the 80's or 75 or something like that.

Interviewer: Where did you find out those figures?

Subjects: Mr. . . . told us. I think the handbook said that also.

Access to Physical Education 20

Five credit students, when asked how they would feel about having students from three credit grade 10 in their physical education 20 course if it were allowed, expressed empathy towards the situation. They realized that scheduling difficulties may have affected students' course selections, and therefore, students should not be penalized.

> I think the odd person should have the chance because some people make mistakes. Maybe he got into the wrong course and realized that he should have taken five credit. If they decide to do that, and they have a good mark, like in the 90's, and the phys. ed. teacher thinks that it will be beneficial, I think it should be okay.

Students from five credit classes identified that if three credit students were willing to make the effort to become good participants, they should be allowed to take physical education 20. The student who identified the mark of 90, however, was demanding that the three credit students possess a high level of skill and a good attitude toward participation in all activities. This expectation might exclude the majority of the students in three credit physical education, especially if they had enrolled in three credit physical education because of their lower ability.

> I wouldn't mind if they were willing to work as hard as the rest of us. If they are lazy they shouldn't be able to go on.

One group of students were told that students who enrolled in three credit physical education, if allowed to take physical education 20, would have an unfair advantage. The teacher making this comment pointed out to his class that students enrolled in three credit physical education had room in their timetables for another three credit course. These students thus had the opportunity to amass six credits instead of the five that could be earned by the five credit students. The teacher appeared to appeal to the students' sense of fair play by questioning whether it would be appropriate to allow them to enroll in physical education 20. He expressed the opinion that the students in three credit physical education were exactly where they should be because they were not highly skilled or athletic. He said

his three credit classes were structured to give the students a lot of "play time."

Interviewer: Will any of you go on next year to take grade 11 phys ed?

Subjects: No, we can't because we would have to go back to grade 10 five credit before you can move up to grade 11.

Interviewer: How do you know this information?

Subjects: It was in the student handbook. But if you have a 95% or something like that you can probably go on, but it is not really fair to those who took it for 80 minutes because we only took it for 40 minutes, so shouldn't be able to go on.

Interviewer: Do you think this is a fair system where three credit is a terminal course?

Subjects: Mr. . . . said that if someone in our class had over 65% he would let them go on if they were good students. But he said he didn't think that would be fair to the five credit guys because we would end up with six credits because we had another three credit academic class, so I don't think that would be fair to them.

Teacher Influence on Student Satisfaction

A significant number of students indicated that the teacher was one of the reasons they liked physical education classes. Students suggested that their teachers varied in their approaches to the class and established an atmosphere based on their talents, abilities and personality.

The teacher determined the atmosphere of the class. Encouraging individual student effort in the class, which

was seen as positive by the other students, was ultimately responsible for forming a positive class atmosphere.

> (our teacher says) don't give up, keep trying. (our teacher) makes everybody try, no matter what shape they are in. He gives us goals to work for.

All students indicated that it was important for the teacher to create an atmosphere that encouraged the students to challenge themselves.

> We learn to encourage each other when we are doing sports. It's not like, "Hey, I'm going to beat you!" It's more like, "Hey, let's all do this together".
>
> The opportunity is there for us to improve and to push ourselves to the limits, but they are our limits, not limits imposed by the teacher.

The only class that didn't feel challenged blamed the teacher for the absence of this quality from their class.

> There was no encouragement to go out and perform. If half of the girls want to stand there and swing the racquet a bit and they get credit for changing and get credit for standing out there doing that. You don't get any encouragement to go out there and try to be better.

In addition to the teacher challenging the students, it is important for the teacher to understand the students. The teacher walks a fine line between meeting students' needs, challenging them, and forcing students to make an effort to realize their potential.

> Mr..... is great. He listens to us and understands us.

> We also did the mile swim, which I wasn't crazy about. But now that I look back I think "Well, that's another thing that I've done!". We have also run 10 km. At the beginning of the year if someone had told me that by the end of the year I would have run 10 km, and swam one mile, I probably would have told them they were crazy.

The teachers' understanding of the students was compared to a friendship by one of the female groups:

> I would say that we are more friends with ..(their teacher).. than we are students and her the teacher.

This feeling of friendship was summarized as "an acceptance of us where we are right now" which stressed the importance of an accepting environment for the students so they could feel confident to perform. The success of this performance was not judged as positive or negative, but rather the students efforts were rewarded by encouragement. This atmosphere was not present in all classes, a point that was noted by the students. One group of students felt that their teacher gave too much attention to those students who didn't come out everyday to participate. The participating students felt cheated and were discouraged from working to improve because the students who didn't work received more attention.

Ultimately, the students believed that the teacher had to encourage the students to try, and to create an atmosphere where they felt comfortable in trying to meet the

high expectations which demanded that they work towards attaining the high level of which they are capable.

> I think teachers should say that you've got to try. Take away the fear of failure, just encourage them to try and if people insult each other in gym, they should be dealt with.

The students expressed opinions of what was good and bad in a teacher. All groups except one expressed satisfaction with their teacher and believed their teacher was doing a good job. The teacher-student relationship that existed in these classes was one of respect for both parties. The teacher is instrumental in affecting the students' attitude towards physical education classes. What was reiterated was the importance of the student's self-concept and his/her level of confidence while participating in physical education classes, and the teacher's role in fostering the environment which encouraged this development.

Summary

The issues raised by the grade 10 students involved in this study were varied, although there were also a great many commonalties in the students' perceptions of physical education classes. Health and fitness were the most frequently cited reasons for the importance of physical education. Although the students voiced their interest in health and fitness, few enjoyed the activities required to

achieve these benefits. Running was the ongoing activity most often listed by the students when asked what they disliked about physical education classes while gymnastics was the most disliked unit of activity.

Students expressed an overall satisfaction with their physical education classes but views differed between three credit and five credit physical education students. One of the factors which affected student satisfaction was the their input into the class curriculum. The presence or absence of student choice, however, was not a factor if the variety of activities offered was deemed satisfactory. The lack of choice was mentioned mainly by the male and female three credit physical education group.

The method of evaluation differed between classes but was generally acceptable to all but one class of three credit females. Evaluation in most cases was weighted more heavily towards attitude and effort rather than skill and ability.

Physical education classes offered a unique opportunity for interaction between students. However, groups were identified that exhibited a social structure within the class that may have been based on ability, but appeared to be more contingent upon effort by the students, that is, the students' willingness to try.

Physical education classes were deemed to be successful and enjoyable only if they offered the students a challenge. All students wanted to improve or work hard or do something that they had not done before. If the expectations for them were low, then the class was unenjoyable.

The students selected either three or five credit physical education based on their perception of their abilities as well as their prior knowledge about the two courses. However, the sources of information were inconsistent and varied greatly with regard to information given. Having completed physical education 10, the students' views of the two course options had changed from their views upon entering the class. This variance raises questions about the process of informing the students about physical education 10. At the completion of physical education 10, a large percentage of five credit physical education students were planning to continue with physical education 20, as were a small percentage of three credit students. However, scheduling difficulties eliminated that option for a lot of the students.

The teacher was identified by the students as being an important determinant of the students' experiences in physical education. The students perceived the teacher as important in providing the positive atmosphere for their class. It was also important for the teacher to challenge the students setting goals that they must strive to achieve.

The teacher must constantly be encouraging so the students could feel comfortable to try, even if they failed. Ultimately, it was the teacher's ability to make the students like themselves that was truly important.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

This section focuses on the key issues identified by students about their physical education classes. The findings of this study are significant to physical educators because they allow teachers to see what factors encourage students' satisfaction with physical education classes, and how best to maximize their satisfaction through restructuring activities and content. For curriculum planners the findings may make them aware of students' views of the present curricular model and its lack of success in meeting all their needs. The findings of this study may encourage teachers and planners to initiate changes that will enhance student satisfaction and thus increase enrollment in non-compulsory physical education classes.

The Development of Fitness

Fitness is a prime objective of every Canadian physical education curriculum examined which included all of the western provinces, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. In Alberta, fitness is one of the seven activity dimensions outlined in the Alberta curriculum, but it is integrated into the other six dimensions: games, gymnastics, dance, aquatics, individual activities and outdoor pursuits.

Nearly all students agreed that health and fitness benefits were important outcomes of the physical education program. However their perceptions of what constituted fitness varied and most students had a very narrow view. Five credit males generally viewed fitness in terms of cardiovascular development. To most three credit males the fact that they could participate in informally organized games meant they were fit. Some females concurred with the opinion that fitness would increase their cardiovascular capacity, while the majority of females valued it for its aesthetic benefits. This finding is consistent with those of Kisabeth (1986), and Earl and Stennett (1987). Most students believed that fitness development gave them the stamina necessary to control their bodies and contributed to their overall sense of well-being.

A lack of knowledge of what constitutes fitness was evident from the responses. Few respondents alluded to the stated health related fitness components of strength, muscular endurance, flexibility and body fatness as set out in the Alberta Curriculum Guide (1988a) and by Corbin (1980). None of Corbin's skill related fitness components, balance, coordination, reaction time, agility, power, or speed was mentioned by the students. Students need to be knowledgeable about all areas of fitness and the contribution of each area to the development and maintenance of their total fitness. Three credit physical education 10 is intended to be a terminal course, according to the

student handbook. The students' knowledge about the components of fitness and how fitness is achieved is inadequate to equip them with the information necessary to form the habits which will ensure that they maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Research has shown that physical education classes do not provide the opportunity for students to participate in activities of sufficient length or intensity to be of any benefit to their cardiovascular development (Siedentop, 1986, Verabioff, 1988). Therefore, present practices in physical education classes must be critically examined if the classes are to influence whether the objective of personal fitness and knowledge of fitness concepts is achieved.

Running and Other Cardiovascular Activities

Running was the main cardiovascular activity used by teachers in the physical education classes in this study. Most students, while expressing a belief that running contributed to their fitness, were not knowledgeable of how best to use this activity to derive the maximum benefit to their fitness. The classes who were informed about the benefits of running for cardiovascular fitness were willing to participate even though they disliked the activity.

The "daily run" in physical education may be more harmful than beneficial because students must be convinced

that they are capable of achieving cardiovascular fitness in a way that does not reinforce the familiar saying "no pain, no gain". The class that participated in the 10 km roadrace ran daily in class because they were working toward a goal. Achieving their goal showed them that they were capable of accepting a challenge, and the running was a means of obtaining their goal. Their success positively influenced their perception of running as an activity.

Cardiovascular activities must be experienced for their positive benefits and they must be enjoyable and challenging to the students so they won't negatively affect their attitudes to continuing the activity as part of their ongoing fitness regime. Strategies which are found to reinforce positive attitudes towards running and other cardiovascular activities should be incorporated into physical education classes.

Choice and Variety of Activities

Students expressed dissatisfaction with the emphasis on skill development and the variety of activities offered. They wanted a change from the skill development emphasis of the typical 'volleyball, basketball, soccer, gymnastics, badminton, track and field' curriculum they had experienced in junior high school.

The main source of dissatisfaction for three credit classes was the emphasis on skill development and the lack

of opportunity to play games resulting from the lack of time in their 40 minute classes. Students felt they had learned the skills in junior high, and resented the time spent on perfecting their skills rather than playing the games. The students also wanted to experience new activities in physical education 10. Although the three credit students needed a positive experience in physical education, they missed out on the fun they had hoped to find in physical education 10 because of the time constraints of daily 40 minute classes. Existing five credit classes offered the greatest variety because of the daily 80 minute class periods. This extra time was necessary to allow students to travel outside the school and experience the activities offered at the community facilities which were new and challenging and contributed to student enjoyment.

Because of the terminal nature of physical education 10, it is critical that the students be exposed to a variety of lifetime activities if programs are to influence their adult activity patterns for a healthy lifestyle. Time constraints do not allow for the use of facilities outside the school which would introduce students to activities they could continue in their adult lives. The goal of physical education "to develop and maintain physical fitness and positive attitudes towards lifelong participation in physical activity" (Alberta Education, 1988a, p.1) is thus not being met in three credit physical education 10.

Few students reported that they had any choice in activities; those who had choice had limited choice, and on rare occasions. None of the three credit classes was given a choice. Although not all five credit students believed that having a choice was a necessity, students who were given a choice indicated that this was one of the most positive aspects of their classes because it gave them a sense of program ownership. Students choice of activities was determined by their interests and their knowledge based upon past experiences. The favourable effects of choice were reported by Schempp, Cheffers and Zaichowsky (1983) who found that students had an increased positive attitude towards physical education classes when they were involved in the curriculum process and allowed to tailor the curriculum to their needs and interests. While it is desirable to allow students some choice, the goals as set out by Alberta Education (1988a) must always be the criteria used to judge the suitability of selection.

Factors Determining Physical Education Course Selection

The course three or five credit option selected by the students was determined by their assessment of their ability. Students rated themselves in comparison with their peers. Their perceived ability relative to that of their peers appeared to be predicated on their past experiences in physical education, particularly those from their immediate past in grade 9.

Physical education 10 is a compulsory course. Students who were confident of their abilities, based on their past school experiences, were directed towards five credit physical education 10 in order to be satisfied and challenged. Those who lacked confidence, or those unable to fit five credit physical education into their timetables chose the three credit option. This option would satisfy the diploma requirements, and the less confident students anticipated that it would be less demanding and less threatening to their self-esteem than the five credit option.

The students' knowledge about the program and expectations of each of the credit options in grade 10 was based on information received from older siblings, friends, junior high physical education teachers and counselors. Each of these sources offered different advice and information about what the students could expect in physical education 10. None of these sources came close to presenting the situation as it actually existed. The students were told that physical education in high school was a lot harder and more demanding, as indicated by their comments: "We were running hurdles in track and they told us that when we got to high school we would have to do it a lot better than that" and " We heard it was harder, more involved and not so relaxed." These comments which conveyed to the students that junior high physical education was easy

compared to what lay ahead may have been used to control the students and pressure them to perform in their junior high classes. However, the effect of these tactics and the information received was to give a false impression of physical education 10 and cause some students to question their capabilities and choose the option they thought would be less demanding and more fun. Consequently some students deprived themselves of the opportunity to discover that their apprehensions about five credit physical education were groundless and found instead that physical education 10 was not the fun and games they had anticipated. For some students enrolled in three credit physical education 10 a reevaluation in relation to their new group of classmates showed their abilities to be superior or comparable to the rest of the class. Thus their confidence to handle physical education 20 was bolstered because they now saw themselves as relatively successful and physically competent.

Those who did take five credit physical education 10 benefitted from the increased class time, which allowed for more program variety and the time for game play, one of the expectations of the three credit group which was not met.

Despite the information contained in the student handbook that three credit physical education 10 was a terminal course, interviews with the students revealed that they were unsure as to whether they could proceed from three credit physical education 10 to physical education 20, and

if they could, what criteria were used to determine this. Some three credit students reported that if they had the approval of their teacher and had attained a satisfactory mark, they could enroll in physical education 20. There was a wide variation in the marks understood by the students to meet the criteria, and none of these was consistent with the marks specified by their teachers. The criteria then for advancement appeared to be arbitrarily set by each teacher. One teacher told her entire three credit physical education 10 class they were capable of coping with physical education 20 and actively encouraged them to enroll, while another teacher set a prerequisite mark of 70%. Another teacher told his students that it would not be fair for someone to go from three credit grade 10 physical education to physical education 20 because they would have one more credit than a person who took five credit physical education. This was due to their enrollment in another three credit academic course on alternate days to their physical education class which allowed them to accumulate six credits.

It seems incongruous that at a time when The Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (1988) lists that its "primary mission be to provide the necessary leadership that will result in a physically active lifestyle for Canadians" (p.3), and Participaction is encouraging everyone to engage in some physical activity, our physical education teachers are not vigorously

encouraging students to be active past the compulsory level of physical education 10. Unlike academic subjects such as mathematics which build on concepts which require some mastery before proceeding, physical education courses try to introduce different activities at the optional levels of physical education 20 and 30 which do not require previous specific skill mastery. Consequently there seems to be no reason to exclude students from the class, and in fact if physical education classes are to promote the goal of lifelong fitness, students must be strongly encouraged to enroll in non-compulsory physical education 20 and 30. In these classes they have the opportunity to experience activities and to develop a degree of competency which may encourage them to pursue the activities into their adult life. The premise is that the involvement in a variety of activities offered in physical education 20 and 30 will encourage students to develop and maintain an active lifestyle. Studies by Smoll, Schutz and Keeney (1976) and Brumbach and Cross (1965) indicate that the longer students are involved in physical education classes, the more positive their attitude is towards physical activity.

Improving Practices in Physical Education

The foregoing discussion suggests implications for action to improve the present practices in physical education and to help physical educators in attaining the

goals set out by Alberta Education. If physical education classes in Canadian high schools are to be effective in equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain an active lifestyle as adults, changes to the present programs are a necessity. The suggestions for change that follow are of importance to physical education teachers and curriculum planners in physical education. The suggestions are based on the key issues raised by the students and reflect concerns they have with current programs in physical education. The physical education program offered in our high schools must meet the needs of the clientele in order to justify its existence. Suggestions by the students that their needs are not being met serves as the basis for the following recommendations regarding fitness, running, choices and variety of activities, which affect students' perceptions of their ability and influence their course selection in physical education.

Fitness and Running

1. If fitness is to be an objective of physical education classes activities must be structured to achieve fitness benefits. This requires that activities of appropriate intensity and duration be included in each class.

2. Since cardiovascular fitness cannot be increased unless activities are of sufficient duration and intensity, and there are also other objectives to be addressed in the physical education class period, consideration must be given to appropriate class length. Classes of 40 minute duration are inadequate to offer a balanced program.

3. Students need to become knowledgeable about fitness in order to act upon their personal fitness needs. It is incumbent upon the teacher to make sure the information has been internalized by the students as evidenced by their demonstrated ability to translate knowledge into practice.

4. The various methods of attaining cardiovascular fitness should be examined, and given the facilities available, the most appropriate activities should be selected in order to fulfill the objectives of the physical education program and satisfy the interests of the students.

5. The students should be challenged with an appropriate goal to work towards in their cardiovascular fitness activity. It has been shown that striving to attain a goal and succeeding has a positive effect on attitudes towards cardiovascular activities.

6. In view of the positive benefits of fitness to health, the Department of Education should be encouraged to eliminate the three credit option for physical education 10 and make physical education 20 and 30 compulsory.

Choice and Variety of Activities Offered

1. Offer more activities at the grade 10 level that are likely to have a carry over into adult life. Since for some students this is their last year of physical education it is imperative that instruction be provided in activities that contribute to a healthy adult lifestyle. Also by interesting them in new activities they may be encouraged to enroll in physical education 20 and 30.

2. Opportunities should be created for students to be involved in the selection of curriculum activities. Their interest should also influence the length of the activity unit, insofar as is feasible. In addition to basing their choices on their interest and past experiences, students should be provided with information on the merits of each activity and its possible benefit to them as well as having exposure to each activity so that intelligent choices may be made. The teacher is responsible to

see that the curriculum requirements are met, but it is important that students feel their opinions are being considered, even though their input must fall within certain guidelines.

3. Other curriculum models must be incorporated into Alberta's activity-based model to better meet the diverse needs of the students. The frequency of comments indicative of student dissatisfaction with the current programs suggests that there are shortcomings with the multi-activity model of curriculum.

Perceived Ability and Course Selection

1. Choose enthusiastic, empathetic five credit physical education 10 students to accompany the high school counselors to junior high schools when they discuss high school registration procedures. These students could give the perspective of students who had experienced physical education 10, answer questions and help to allay the apprehension felt by students about to enter senior high school.

2. Ensure that information in the student handbook and the information given by junior and senior high school physical education teachers and counselors is consistent. Based on the evidence of

misinformation uncovered in this study, counselors must be prepared to correct false impressions.

3. Remove the prerequisites for physical education 20 because some students have enrolled in three credit physical education 10 based on false or insufficient information, or because of apprehensions based on lack of knowledge or lack of self-confidence in their ability. For others, timetable difficulties preclude the selection of the five credit option. These students should not be penalized by not being allowed to take physical education 20.

4. Teachers should encourage grade 10 students to take physical education 20 to experience the fitness benefits and to have the opportunity to learn new activities

5. Restructure the time allotted to three credit physical education 10 from 40 minute daily classes to 80 minute classes held every second day. This would encourage a greater variety of activities offered because there would be time to travel to facilities outside the school. This increased class time would also provide time for game play in addition to skill development.

Summary

Adaptations to current practices in physical education are necessary in order to better meet the needs of the students and to offer a challenging program of varied activities. Physical education 20 and 30 are exposed to a decreasing clientele, so these courses are obviously not considered important or appealing to many students. It is evident that all situations and activities in physical education classes do not appear inviting to students when viewed from the perspective of the three credit "outsiders" as shown by their comments. Five credit physical education students reveal, however, that once inside they find their experiences challenging and satisfying. The findings of this study reveal that physical education teachers must consider changes to their programs to meet the students' needs, and offer more incentive for the students to come to view the situation from the insider's perspective. As physical educators we are in a situation that requires us to employ new marketing strategies in order to encourage students to "buy into" our product. What better strategy than to provide a program which is challenging in an environment which is encouraging and allows for success. The challenge awaits.

CHAPTER SEVEN

REFLECTIONS

Personal Teaching Experiences Influenced by This Study

This study has influenced my planning and I believe that I am a more effective teacher because of my involvement in this study.

One modification I have made is to allow the students an opportunity to play a role in the yearly planning for their class. Certain guidelines are set within which activities may be chosen: availability of facilities, availability of transportation to and from community facilities, availability of equipment required for the activity, suitability of the activity for the particular age group, and adherence to the provincial curriculum with regard to the amount of time spent on specific activities. There is inevitably some grumbling as I let them know that dance, swimming and gymnastics are my chosen activities because I, too, am a member of this class. I have found the students to be more prepared for the activity which is coming next and they are much better informed about our goals for the year.

Another adaptation our physical education department has made is a fitness challenge at the physical education 20 level. It has proven to be successful beyond what we thought possible. We introduced a mini triathalon into the

physical education 20 program as a means of issuing an individual challenge to the students that would allow them to test their physical limits while developing their fitness with a specific goal in mind. All students had different goals for themselves in the triathalon. The students who were driven by competitiveness issued challenges to one another that spurred them on. Others who were worried about merely completing the event set smaller goals for themselves. The sense of camaraderie that developed through the running of this event was evident in the "high fives" that were generously handed out along the route between the students involved. No mention was made of winners and losers but each student was encouraged to complete the activity and achieve their personal goals. The finish line was a busy place during the entire race, and the congratulations were just as hearty for the last person across the line as for the first.

Students must enroll in physical education 20 to "experience" the triathalon. It is one of our marketing techniques used to encourage our grade 10 students to enroll in physical education 20. We have now run the event for three years, and although the focus remains the same, our participation has increased from 36 participants in 1986-87 to 67 participants in 1988-89. This years event involved over 60 parent, teacher and student volunteers which contributed greatly to its success.

The T-shirts that were given to the finishers identified them around the school as "one of those silly people who ran in the Tin Man Triathalon". These shirts are worn with pride because they were earned through hard work and effort. Consequently, when I ask students what they have heard about our high school physical education classes they most often identify the triathalon. They say that they have heard it is hard but worth the effort. At my school the enrollments for physical education 20 have increased enough to warrant the addition of two more classes. I believe this is a fact that demonstrates that students are being invited inside to view the situation. I believe that they like what they see.

As a result of the success of the Triathalon in physical education 20, our physical education department initiated a fitness challenge for all the grade 10 students in our school. Because physical education 10 in our school is five credit, offered every second day for the entire year, all of the 145 grade 10's in the school trained for the Roadrunner 6km Roadrace in their physical education classes. The focus of our running program in grade 10 was the preparation for the roadrace. The roadrace was run at the beginning of June, culminating the year of training for the event. All students were encouraged to set personal goals for completing the event with participation in the event as the main focus. The importance of the roadrace was recognized by all students, one student who had a cast on

his leg competed in a wheelchair. Other students who were absent on the day of the event chose to run the roadrace during their noon hour so they too could complete the event.

T-shirts were handed out to all participants who completed the course and as a result 145 students are walking advertisements of the importance that our physical education department attaches to fitness and personal challenge.

I believe that the increased enrollments in the physical education 20 programs are the direct result of the program adaptations which have been made as a result of this study. Our 1988-89 enrollments showed 60% of our grade 10 students enrolled in physical education 20 for grade 11 and 50% of our grade 11 students enrolled in physical education 30 for grade 12.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE INSTRUCTIONS

I am a graduate student from the University of Alberta, and I am doing research to complete my Masters Thesis. This research consists of two parts. The first part is a questionnaire which you will fill out today. Your responses on the questionnaire are confidential and will be seen only by me. The questionnaire is designed to tell me about your attitudes and feelings about physical education classes. Since feelings are personal I would encourage you to work independently while filling out the questionnaires.

The second part of my study is made up of interviews. Not all of the students who take part in the first part of the study, the questionnaire, will be interviewed. If you have no objection to taking part in the second part of the study please indicate this by writing a "Yes" at the bottom of the questionnaire. Interviews will be conducted during your physical education class time or noon hour, whichever is more convenient for you.

There is a number on the front of the questionnaire. I would ask that when you hand in the questionnaire you record the number beside your name on the class list. This will enable me to identify those of you who have expressed an interest in being interviewed.

This questionnaire ia part of a research project that I am involved in as a graduate student at the University of Alberta. It is aimed at finding out what students' perceptions are of physical education classes. Please answer the questions completely as the information will provide insight into students' perspectives of physical education classes.

Your participation is on a voluntary basis, and your anonymity is guaranteed.

Physical Education Questionnaire

1. Are physical education classes important to you? Why or why not?

2. What did you find that was positive about the physical education program?

3. What did you dislike about the physical education program?

4. Are you going to take grade 11 physical education next year? Why or why not?

5. Are you presently taking 3 or 5 credit physical education? Why did you make this choice?

6. What is the name of the Junior High School that you attended?

Age:_____ Sex:_____(M),_____(F)

THANK-YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

_____

Bob Gardner

APPENDIX B

Parental Consent Forms

Bob Gardner
Department of Secondary Education
Faculty of Education
338 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB

Dear Parent or Guardian:

My name is Bob Gardner and I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta. I am presently involved in research which is looking at the meaning of physical education classes for grade 10 students. Your son/daughter was involved in the initial stages of the research by filling out a questionnaire that gave information about his/her likes and dislikes related to physical education classes. A number of students have been selected for interviewing for the purpose of exploring the meaning behind their responses on the questionnaire.

Your son's/daughter's involvement in the research is on a voluntary basis and will only be undertaken upon the return of this consent form with your signature attached. Your child's responses are confidential and their anonymity is guaranteed. Interview times will be arranged through the school in conjunction with the students' availability. Please return this form, signed or unsigned, to the school. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Bob Gardner

_____ I understand and consent to my son's/daughter's participation in the study.

_____

_____ I do not wish my son/daughter to participate in this study.

_____

APPENDIX C

Interview Guide

Question #1: Are physical education classes important to you? Why or why not?

If The response was YES, the reasons given were:
- necessary for fitness
- necessary for health
- sports are fun
- wouldn't be involved in exercise otherwise

If the response was NO, the reasons given were:
- I get enough exercise out of school
- studying is more important

Question #2: What did you find that was positive about the physical education program?

Response
- the variety of activities offered
- keeps me in shape
- specific activities
- teamwork/sportsmanship
- fun

Question #3: What did you dislike about the physical education program?

Response
- specific activities
- lack of effort and poor attitude of others
- no choice in the curriculum

Question #4: Are you going to take grade 11 physical education? Why or why not?

If the response was NO, the reasons given were:

- because I have only taken 3 credit
- no room in my timetable
- pursuing academic interests
- not a priority

If the response was YES, the reasons given were:

- to stay in shape
- I enjoyed it

Questions #5: Are you presently taking 3 or 5 credit physical education? Why did you make this choice?

If the response was THREE CREDIT, the reasons were:

- that is all I could fit into my timetable
- more interested in academic
- a mix up in my schedule
- so I don't have to carry on with it

Other Areas to be Questioned:

- junior high school experience. Good or bad?

- requirements for passing from 3 credit to 5 credit: where they found out this information.

- if not going on in physical education, were they equipped to take care of their own fitness needs?

- after being through the course would they make the same choice again?

- is there an image attached to the person in 3 credit and the person in 5 credit ?

APPENDIX D

Sample of an Interview Transcript

I-All of you have attended different junior high schools. What were your phys ed programs like in junior high school?

S-Mine were co-ed. We got split up for some activities and we were together for some. It wasn't very good because there were so many of us you really didn't get individual attention.

My co-ed class was okay but the guys could always do more than us, like in baseball they would all hit home runs and all the girls would just tap it. The guys would laugh because we couldn't hit it.

I-Would you rather be in a class of girls only?

S-Yes; but sometimes the girls in our class would go off for an activity, so it wasn't so bad.

I-Were the rest of you taught in single sex classes?

S-Yes.

I-Did you like that?

S-I didn't really like our program. It was really stressed that there was a lot of competition. If you weren't the best jock or the teacher's pet you didn't get a good mark.

Or unless you could perform well. They always marked us on how good we were. They said at the beginning of the year in this big pep talk that it was all effort in this class, but it was not like that at all.

I-So you feel that you were marked on your ability?

S-Yes. In our gym class we all had numbers (??) and we mainly got marked for being changed out. I don't know how they came up with the other part; I guess maybe on if you tried hard. There were so many people I don't know how they could have marked us all.
We got skill tests on every unit and it was a drag. It was dumb because a lot of people try really hard but not everyone is excellent at everything, and we also didn't get very much time. We got gym every 3 days so if we had a two week unit that meant only 3 classes and we would be expected to learn our skills in 3 times 60 minute gym classes.

Our teachers really favored the better athletes. It was okay, but you could really tell that they were favoring which seems to be quite different from here.

I-What is your phys ed class like this year?

S-It is better--a lot better. I never really liked gym although I like sports because I didn't like the atmosphere all that much, but now this year I do. I like the atmosphere more than I like the actual sports.

It is less pressure. We aren't timed on our runs or anything, but you want to because of the emphasis that she puts on physical fitness. Just as long as you finish it and then you feel like you can do it.

You do it more for yourself. I would say we are more friends with (our teacher) than we are students and them teachers.

We are also more friends with each other. Everyone gets along in our class.

I-So there is no pressure?

S-No. There are some people who are really competitive. You can't ever totally get away from that, but you don't have to be competitive. It usually comes from the teacher, competition and stuff like that. (our teacher) is not really athletic, so she doesn't expect us to be top caliber. I mean she is good, but she is not "total athlete", so she doesn't expect us to be either.

I-Do you think it would be different if you were in (another teachers) class?

S-I think so, a little. She is more of an athletic teacher. She times their runs and it is more important for skills because she pushes them, to make sure they are doing it right. I suppose it is easier to mark on skill than attitude, because it takes a lot longer to figure out someone's attitude than their skill.

I-You are not pushed in the class but are you challenged?

S-Yes. I think that you can challenge yourself as much as you want and make it to what you want it to be, like if you want to be competitive you can be. You will get better marks if you try harder.

With all the sports that we have done, because of the time spent on it, have gotten better. After two weeks of badminton, I'm sure everyone improved 100% and everyone

feels better about it, and enjoys it more, and we want to get better at it. Like I have played tennis a lot since we took it in class.

I-So the opportunity is there for you to improve and to push yourself to your limits, but they are your limits, not limits imposed by the teacher. Is this correct?

S-Yes. Last year when we did fitness testing we were measuring up to someone elses standards. If you couldn't get an excellent in everything, they really put you down. It was degrading to be told you couldn't do something.

Also, I think that this type of gym class is better for people's attitudes. Last year people who were athletic or the teacher liked them, they got high marks and they thought "I'm hot and you are scum". In this class, it is like we are all equal and sort of a big family, and I think it sort of helps people's attitudes when they grow up.

We all learn to encourage each other when we are doing sports. It's not like "hey, I'm going to beat you!" It's more like "Hey, let's all do this together".

I-Is this what it was like in junior high?

S-Yes.

I-Do you have any of the students in your class now who were on that top rung in junior high?

S-Yes. Val is. She is a really good athlete who used to come in first a lot. But this year I think she has changed a lot as far as her attitude towards marks. She just does it for fun now and the teachers from our other school are expecting her to win and now she doesn't really want to.

I-What had you all heard about grade 10 phys ed?

S-That it was harder and that we had to run. We had to run a lot.

I-Who told you that?

S-Grade 11's. My friend who was in the gym class last semester.

I-Was she in with (your teacher) also?

S-Yes. That class didn't seem to get along as well with (our teacher). I don't know why.

I-Are you five a select group, or does your whole class feel this way?

S-Our whole class feels the same.

I-What were your marks in junior high phys ed?

S-Low A's--high B's

80 or 81

75-80

I-Did you deserve those marks?

S-It's hard to say because I thought the teacher last year was really biased towards people.

I-Was she biased toward you?

S-Yes.

Our teacher was like that too. All the jocks buddied up with her and all the popular people. You could always tell who she hated because they always got picked out and corrected for doing anything wrong.

This year it is a lot different because I know a girl who was in this class last semester. She is a really good athlete, but she didn't get a good mark because she had an attitude problem. I think that (our teacher) marks us almost entirely on participation and attitude and coming to class.

I would say that the best athlete in this class doesn't have the highest mark.

I-Are you marked at all on ability?

S-Yes, to an extent.

I-Is it on improvement in ability?

S-I think so. Yeah, I would say so. If you try you improve. In skating we worked in skill groups and you were marked on how many cards you progressed, so therefore we were marked on improvement.

Sometimes it is really hard to try hard if you don't like the sport. You try to like it, but you can't. You just can't help to have a bad attitude and that is what brings your mark down.

I-So there are activities that you have done this year that you have disliked?

S-Not very many. At the beginning of the year (our teacher) told us what they usually do and then asked us if there was something that we really wanted to do. Biking was added.

With the running, we had said she made us run a lot, but we got to choose. We decided we wanted to do a certain run and it was her job to train us for it, so that is why we ran like we did.I-So you had a choice in the activities you did this year?

S-Yes. We had to do some things that were on the curriculum, but it was nothing that bad, because we only took it for a few days.

It is just sometimes when you think that everyone else is better than you then you get mad at yourself. It's not like you have to be as good as them, but inside you think you should be. The teacher isn't saying that. It is just from inside, because you can't be as good as everyone else.

I-What had you heard about 3 credit as opposed to 5 credit phys ed?

S-I know a girl in 3 credit and she wishes she had taken 5 credit. A lot of people who are in it are borderline people who didn't know if they liked phys ed so took 3 credit.

They don't do much activity, like running for them is one lap around the small gym.

For people who just don't want to try. They just don't care, or maybe the schedule won't hold 5 credit. Or maybe they don't like it.

I-You have been talking to people who are in the class. Did you have any idea there was a big difference before you came to this school?

S-I kind of figured that 5 credit was for people who liked gym and 3 credit was for people who had to take it, like they just took it for credits to get out of gym.

I actually thought 5 credit was going to be the same as always, just like junior high, but I had survived through them so I would take it. I was surprised and I was really happy that I took 5 credit.

I thought 5 credit would be for total jocks, and that 3 credit was for people who could barely move across the floor.

For awhile I thought I should have taken 3 credit, but now I'm glad I took 5 credit.

I-You have said that 5 credit was for all the jocks. Do you consider yourselves in that category?

S-No, not at all.

I-Not even after you had achieved such a high mark in phys ed in grade 9?

S-In grade 9 it didn't really matter if you were good at sports, but if you hung around with the jocks you were sort of nagged.

I played sports all through junior high, but I never really considered myself a jock.

I-What had come out in the questionnaire was that people who were taking 3 credit felt that they would be put down by the jocks in 5 credit.

S-There are lots of people in our class that aren't that good, but they like phys ed just as much as everybody else, and they are not put down.

I-Okay, of the people taking 5 credit, some had said that 3 credit was for fat people. The boys had said that 3 credit was for wimps and nerds. Are you aware of that sort of image that goes along with 3 credit and 5 credit?

S-Some people say that 3 credit is for bangers and fat people.

There is a real misconception. There are a lot of people in our gym class who are not jocks and I don't think that any of us here are total jocks. I don't know how people decide.

It kind of changed from grade 9 to grade 10. In grade 9 it is more jocks and stuff, but in grade 10 it is more if you enjoy phys ed, then good for you. Nobody else is really pressured to go either way.

I-Has the emphasis really changed in grade 10?

S-Yes. You get a choice now of which gym you want to take. In grade 9 you took the only one offered whether you liked it or not.

I-Now that you have been through grade 10, you can see that these notions of jocks is not well founded. Coming into grade 10, what did you think?

S-I thought for sure I was going to be the worst person in my gym class.

I think a lot of people are really self conscious about how good they are and those people are most likely to go in 3 credit just so that they are not going to be put down because that's what they think will happen in 5 credit.

I-Can anyone that is taking 3 credit phys ed go on to take phys ed 20?

S-No. They have to take grade 10 phys ed for 5 credits and then they could go on to take phys ed 20.

I-How would you feel if they could go directly from 3 credit grade 10 on to 5 credit phys ed 20?

S-I wouldn't mind if they were willing to work as hard as the rest of us.

Some people didn't have room for it so they should be able to.

If they are lazy shouldn't be able to go on.

There were some girls in our class who didn't change out and they got booted. If it would have been me, I would have booted them out in the first week. They got a lot of chances but they screwed up. It wasn't the teacher's fault. Whenever they showed up they always had excuses. It was bad. They weren't a part of our group, so it is sort of unfair if people like that get to stay in our class because we are all making a big effort and then they pass even though they haven't come.

You sort of fell that they don't deserve the credits because they weren't doing anything, but they get the credit.

A lot of people don't think that gym is that important, so they just put down one of them "Oh, I might as well just take this". A lot of people who did get kicked out should obviously have been in 3 credit gym or not at all. But I don't think they really gave it much thought. More thought needs to go into it.

They think of it as an option rather than a course that has fun activity that is going to further your skills.

I-Are you all going to go on and take phys ed 20?

S-Yes,

(One response): No. I really don't know why. I guess I wanted a spare.

I-Were you all able to fit it into your schedules?

S-Yes. I made room for mine.

I-What did you have to give up?

S-I should have taken typing 10, but I wanted gym.

I didn't sign up for phys ed 20 because, and this is kind of selfish of me, but if I didn't get (the same teacher), I don't want to take gym. No offense to (the other teachers), but I just don't think it would be like this year--it would be like the same old gym back in junior high. I didn't want to take the chance that it would be like that.

I don't think it would matter which teacher we get next year because a lot of what we feel is because of the group we have in this class. No one fights or hates each other.

I-Is anyone favored in your class this year?

S-Well, (our teacher) spreads herself around and doesn't stick around one person or a group.

I-What do you really alike about your phys ed class?

S-The people in it, the friends. How we can all stay together. We can all laugh together at each other and when one person does well we all support that person for doing well.

I-How important was the Amazon Road Race?

S-Really important because everyone did it and everyone accomplished something. When we talked about it at the beginning everyone talked about not even being able to do it. I didn't think I could finish it.

My friends encouraged me so much. In grade 9 I resented gym so much and I came into grade 10 resenting gym. I think that I've improved my attitude a whole lot, and I needed that. I was too negative.

I-What else is good about your phys ed class?

S-The amount of time we get to do things. We also did the mile swim, which I wasn't too crazy about, but now that I look back, I think "Well that is another thing I've done". We have also run 10 km. At the beginning of the year if someone had told me that by the end of the year I would have run 10 km, and swam 1 mile, I probably would have told them they were crazy.

We have accomplished a lot and I think that is neat.

I-Do you like running?

S-I like it more than I used to. I always used to hate it, especially when you got timed. I hated getting timed, but I like running just for myself.

In junior high when we had to do the dreaded 12 minute run, I would get sick the night before, because I was so nervous. But now, like before the 10 km run, I was a little bit nervous, but that feeling wasn't there at all. I felt good that I was doing it.

I-Why is running included in your class?

S-Because it helps with our heart rate. That is another thing we have learned so much about this year, about how important physical fitness is. This is terrible, but I always go home and tell my dad he is going to die soon because his heart rate is so high. Now I've got him out jogging and biking. We have also done lots on nutrition.

I-So you have learned a lot about fitness. If you had not been able to make room in your timetable for phys ed 20, would you have felt quite confident in your skills and abilities that you have learned from phys ed 10?

S-Oh, yes. I still plan on doing things even though I'm not taking phys ed next year. I'm not going to be lazy.

It has given me the strength to go for more things. This year I signed up for baseball because before I would have thought I'd be the worst. Now it is like "Who cares? Look how much fun it will be".

This summer I plan on running a lot. I used to be the person who must have hated running the most, but now I want to run and I don't think it is that bad anymore. I used to think a mile was so far, but now it is nothing.

You learn a lot of things that you can take in to your own lifestyle, and that gets you involved outside of school I used the tennis courts a lot now.

I-What does fitness mean to you?

S-Being able to go out and do a sport and not getting totally tired. You can go out and do things and not be worried about your body not being able to handle it.

Having fun. Feeling good about doing a sport. You don't have to be totally muscular or slim, but if you feel good inside when you finish playing..

Just participating in anything and enjoying it.

I-Does this class address fitness concerns? Do you get fit in this class?

S-Yes. I think so.

I think it is up to you, though. If you are still going to go home and eat, I don't think that you can expect to be fitter. I don't know if I've lost any weight or not, but a lot of people have commented that I look slimmer or that I have firmed up.

In grade 9, even though my class had phys ed everyday it didn't seem like you were getting fit. Our classes were so big you spent a lot of time standing around. You could have taken off somewhere and the teacher wouldn't have noticed. They were either getting mad at the ones who weren't doing anything or praising the jocks so the people in the middle were never challenged or pushed.

This year it is more personalized and when we do activities the teacher gets right into it with us.

I-Do you like it when the teacher participates with you?

S-Yeah. We never did anything fun in grade 9. It was never fun to go to phys ed, it was a jog. This year it is a nice break, to get away from a desk and do something.

I-If you had to go down to your junior high school and talk to your grade 9's and tell them what to take, phys ed 3 credit or phys ed 5 credit, what would you tell them?

S-My sister is in the middle group, not a jock, and she wasn't going to take 5 credit. I told her you have to enjoy phys ed but you don't have to be good at it, so she should take it.

Even people who don't enjoy phys ed in grade 9, because I didn't enjoy phys ed in grade 9, I would still tell them to take it.

I-Would you tell the grade 9's to base their decision on ability or interest or what?

S-Attitudes. If they want gym to be fun, not a chore, take 5 credit. They also have to be willing to work at it.

I would only say that I like 5 credit and I'm not a jock. I couldn't say about 3 credit, because I haven't taken it.

In 3 credit it doesn't appear that they have a choice in activities and a lot of people who take 3 credit would enjoy a lot of the activities we do in 5 credit like badminton.Also we have longer classes, so we can do more. It is more individual sport oriented, not so much team sports.

We had more variety. They didn't have much of a variety. If we are not good at one thing we would still be good at other things.

I-Overall, how do you feel about your phys ed class?

S-Good. Happy about it. I'm glad I took it. I've never felt this way about gym before.

Maybe it was the group.

I-How does this develop?

S-We socialized a lot, got to know people a lot. We worked together. I've developed a lot of friendships. I'm really glad I have.

I-I want you to tell me now the difference between the guys and the girls. What you feel now about yourself.

S-One thing that has really been stressed is that we can do phys ed as well as a guy, and we can feel good about doing sports with guys. When they ran a mile, they were really puffing. We ran 10 km and they thought we were crazy.